

**THE EDUCATION OF THE PROTAGONIST AS READER
IN THE EARLY *BILDUNGSROMAN***

by

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The dissertation investigates reading behaviors in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96), Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798/1843) and Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) within the framework of the history of reading and book production. Social and technological pressures during the latter part of the eighteenth century resulted in a re-definition and re-invention of the reading process as the modern book was being "invented." New themes and genres appeared on the literary horizon that had as a goal the education of a new kind of reader. Goethe's, Tieck's, and Novalis's novels, which were products of the paradigm shift in reading, did not, however, just embrace changes that were already in place. By engaging in the contemporary discussion about new and old reading behaviors, each of these works promoted a new kind of reading that in one way or another maintained older forms while still recognizing the revolution that the irreversible technological advances had initiated.

Drawing on discussions by Engelsing and Schön on the history of reading, the dissertation shows that the three novels record new reading strategies by analyzing the epochal changes in terms of a three-fold movement from intensive to extensive reading, reading aloud to reading silently, and communal to solitary reading. Additionally, it shows how the novels investigate the relationship between the reception of textual and visual artifacts and, thereby, contribute to the contemporary discourse on changes in the aesthetic status of image and text.

The three novels explore these shifts from different angles. The *Lehrjahre* thus analyzes the transition from intensive to extensive reading by placing these modalities between reading in a community and reading in solitude. *Sternbald*, less concerned with the complexities of this transition, focuses on the communal aspect of reading by exploring how a revitalized orality can affect a rapidly changing reading culture. *Ofterdingen*, by contrast, reflects on the inherent contradiction of efforts to enhance reading culture by restoring orality. For Novalis, the emergence of extensive solitary readers was final and irreversible.

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PREFACE

“Hier ist Ihr Lehrbrief, sagte der Abbé, beherzigen Sie ihn, er ist von wichtigem Inhalt. Wilhelm nahm ihn auf, eröffnete ihn und las: Lehrbrief” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 874). With this certificate, the protagonist of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96) begins to read his own life story—the very story the novel has just told. I have often returned to this scene to question why, during this crucial moment in his protagonist’s life and *Bildung*, Goethe presents him reading. I have come to see the scene as a paradigmatic site of reading, connecting *Wilhelm Meister* and other novels like it, such as Tieck’s *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798) and Novalis’s *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), to the history of reading. All three novels construct environments that emphasize their protagonists’ educations as readers. Wilhelm reads throughout the novel. His reading in the Hall of Past is paradigmatic because it is the culminating scene of his education as a reader. Similarly, Franz’s and Heinrich’s education consists of reading various types of texts throughout the novels.

In this dissertation, I argue that *Bildung* in all three novels aims at the construction of a new reader as a significant factor in the emergence of literature as an institution. To describe the formation of this reader, however, reading in these novels often encompasses more than just written texts. Wilhelm’s, Franz’s, and Heinrich’s reading expands the traditional meaning of the term. Accordingly, I will discuss the protagonists in all three novels as they participate in a variety of reading situations that include, in addition to books, images, combinations of images

and texts, discussions, theatrical productions, the translated script of a play, songs, and orally narrated stories. Treating the reception of these various artifacts as reading is helpful for understanding how the novels' authors reacted to and dealt with the emergence of new reading strategies and the disappearance or transformation of established behaviors.

Technological advances at the end of the eighteenth century marked dramatic changes in reading behavior. This change can be seen as a paradigm shift, as new reading practices replaced old ones, affecting how and what people read, the social and physical environment of reading, and the places where readers had access to books.¹ My dissertation fills a scarcely treated area in the scholarship by showing in what way Goethe's, Tieck's, and Novalis's novels are products of this paradigm shift in reading. The novels were not just products of their own time, however. My dissertation also shows how the authors engaged in the contemporary discourse about new and old reading behaviors. Each in its own way promoted a kind of reading that maintains older forms of reading revolutionized by technological advancements. The promotion of this kind of reading can be seen in each protagonist's *Bildung*. This dissertation, therefore, is a detailed analysis of the protagonists' *Bildung* through the context of reading, and it contributes to the history of reading as seen through fictional texts.

¹ My understanding of paradigms and their emergence, transformation, and decline is influenced by Thomas S. Kuhn's description of scientific paradigms and their changes. A paradigm provides a framework for scientific research but simultaneously imposes limitations by its basic commitments (5). These limitations result in anomalies which eventually subvert the existing paradigm (5-6) and lead to a major reconstruction of ideas, or what Kuhn would call a scientific revolution: "They are the tradition-shattering complements to the tradition-bound activity of normal science" (6).

1.0 BOOKS, READERS, AND LITERATURE

At the end of the eighteenth century, a modern literary sensibility and culture emerged that had historical roots in the social and economic changes of the time. This literary culture was an expression of the emerging middle class, which as a new social grouping was driven by social, political, and economic aspirations, as well as self-defining cultural and intellectual goals. These cultural aims, in particular, took shape in the context of an evolving private sphere, as Jürgen Habermas argues:

Noch bevor die Öffentlichkeit der öffentlichen Gewalt durch das politische Raisonement der Privatleute streitig gemacht und am Ende ganz entzogen wird, formiert sich unter ihrer Decke eine Öffentlichkeit in unpolitischer Gestalt—die literarische Vorform der politisch fungierenden Öffentlichkeit. (44)

Habermas explains this process as the “Selbstaufklärung der Privatleute über die genuinen Erfahrungen ihrer neuen Privatheit” (44). The key notion here is the self-education, or self-enlightenment (*Selbstaufklärung*), that arose within a new private sphere as famously documented in Immanuel Kant’s essay “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” (1783/84). Kant’s contribution to Friedrich Nicolai’s call in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* became an essential part of an extensive debate during the German *Aufklärung* that promoted reforms in *Bildung* through the public’s *Selbstaufklärung*. Kant envisioned these reforms as

evolutionary, i.e., without the violence of actual political revolutions.¹ For him, Enlightenment would empower a reading public that was already emerging at the end of the eighteenth century and would soon become one of the main intellectual forces of the age.

This new intellectual *élite* made its appearance during the last decades of the eighteenth century. ““Professional men,”” as Walter Horace Bruford relates, were “a product of modern times” (235). As a group of professionals, including doctors, lawyers, public officials, teachers and professors, as well as writers, it originated largely in the emerging middle class, which had benefited from a new secular education since the second half of the century. As the Enlightenment took hold in intellectual circles, then, education that had previously occurred only within the Church shifted to secular institutions, thereby opening it up to a wider audience (Bruford 235-37).

With secularization, there was also more leisure time for people that was very often filled with reading. Furthermore, as *Bildung* became less religious, reading itself changed. Importantly, Engelsing divides the history of reading into two major periods, which he characterizes as first intensive and then extensive reading:

Bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts war der typische Gewohnheitsleser ein intensiver Leser, der eine kleine Auswahl von Büchern oder ein einziges Buch immer wieder las, seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts ein extensiver Leser, der zahlreiche Bücher las und ein einzelnes selten oder überhaupt nicht wieder vornahm. (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122)

This important transition in reading behavior was the result, on the one hand, of the shift in education and, on the other, of technological advances that led to the proliferation of book production. Because changes in reading behavior also influenced the types of books that people

¹ “Daher kann ein Publikum nur langsam zur Aufklärung gelangen. Durch eine Revolution wird vielleicht wohl ein Abfall von persönlichem Despotismus und gewinnsüchtiger oder herrschsüchtiger Bedrückung, aber niemals wahre Reform der Denkungsart zu Stande kommen” (Kant 54-55).

read, new genres in literature arose, including the novel. And as readers and literary production began to interact, a new kind of novel emerged that would be known as the *Bildungsroman*. The new genre had a definite relationship to the modern readership from the outset, and, although all of these topics have been well researched, we will want to look at the historical contexts of its emergence, including changes in the book trade, in formal education, and in reading behavior.

In this chapter I explore the effects of the changing book trade during the second half of the eighteenth century, when technological advances made the print media more accessible. In particular, I will focus on those changes that affected readers and reading behaviors. Furthermore, all of these developments produced an effect on literature itself, which in terms of its internal organization, saw the emergence of new genres, and in terms of its external organization, evolved into an institution. My study of the newly emerging readership and its effects on literature will enable me to frame an analysis of the fictionally constructed reader figures in the *Bildungsroman*, in particular, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96), Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798) and Friedrich von Hardenberg's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802).

1.1 BOOK PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Culture critics rightly refer to epochal changes during the Enlightenment in Germany, when the proliferation of printed books and the growing needs of readers (*Leserwünsche*) combined to produce a peaceful 'cultural revolution' (*Kulturrevolution*) (Raabe 272). Even an eighteenth-century contemporary book trader and journalist cited by Wittmann compares the new cultural phenomenon in Germany to the French revolution: "So lange die Welt stehet, sind keine

Erscheinungen so merkwürdig gewesen als in Deutschland die Romanleserey, und in Frankreich die Revolution. Diese zwey Extreme sind ziemlich zugleich miteinander großgewachsen” (Wittmann, “Der gerechtfertigte Nachdrucker” 309, see also Heinzmann 139). The main protagonist of this cultural revolution was the emerging middle-class in the developing towns of the German-speaking world. An enlightened bourgeois society came forward that was better informed about social and economic issues than before—to the point that it even influenced cultural developments (Raabe, “Der Buchhändler” 271-72; Vierhaus 81-85).²

The new class took on an influential role in many areas of life and society. Craftsmen and traders quickly assumed significant positions in the economy, running the machinery of everyday life more smoothly and shaping the cultural landscape. As Raabe describes them, moreover, the craftsmen were key figures of intellectual reform (Raabe 273). They mediated between the writer and his reading public. However, their role was not limited to that. Dominating the book trade and contributing to a thriving industry, they effected a fundamental change in the literary scene as well. In short, they belonged to a “Kaufmannsstand im Dienste der Gelehrsamkeit” (Raabe 272). The middle class not only served the book trade, in its broader sense,³ however, it also produced readers and, thus, consumers of the trade. These twin functions had an effect that was more than just socio-economic.

Important changes in social structure unquestionably played a major role in the proliferation of the production and circulation of print media. In his article “Literacy Drives in Pre-industrial Germany,” Gawthrop explores initiatives in early modern Germany that led to

² “Es entstand eine aufgeklärte bürgerliche Gesellschaft, die über die soziale und ökonomische Beziehungen besser informiert war als vorher, die Ansprüche stellte und im kulturellen Bereich den Aufbruch einer ästhetischen Bewegung bedeutete, die mit dem ‘Sturm und Drang’ begann und später in die ‘Klassik’ mündete” (Raabe 271-72).

³ Cf. Paul Raabe’s discussion of the meaning of book trade: “Man spricht vom Buchhandel und meint damit die Gesamtheit aller am Handel beteiligten Berufsgruppen. Der Buchhändler im engeren Sinne, der ‘bookseller,’ ist derjenige geblieben, der dem Kunden Bücher verkaufte” (“Der Buchhändler” 289).

high literacy rates by the early seventeen-hundreds. Although Gawthrop argues that the “growth in the consumption of printed materials occurred in part because of the considerable social change that marked this period” (Gawthrop 47), it would be difficult to define only one cause of the changes in proliferation of the book trade during the second half of the eighteenth century. Were they the result of technological advances, writers’ aspirations, or the more demanding needs of a growing reading public? To answer this question, it is crucial to consider the simultaneous appearance of all these phenomena and their mutual influence as they emerged from the spirit of the Enlightenment. To understand fully the emergence of a new type of reader and his or her⁴ reading behavior, each must be explored.

Booksellers,⁵ of course, as part of the new merchant class, played a crucial role in the distribution of printed books, assuming a middle position between writer and reader. They served both learning and scholarship (*Gelehrsamkeit*). Raabe even claims that without the bookseller, the achievements of the Enlightenment would have been unthinkable: “Er war zur Schlüsselfigur einer geistigen Reform in Deutschland geworden, die eine Revolution in diesen Jahren nicht mehr erforderlich machte” (“Der Buchhändler” 272-73). Following a similar line of argument, Percy Ernst Schramm points out that even *Kaufleute* (merchants) in general were an important part of the reading public and actively participated in promoting books: “Diese jungen Kaufleute berichteten sich wechselseitig über die Bücher, die sie (noch nicht abgelenkt durch Kino, Radio und Fernsehen) in überraschender Menge lasen” (“Zur Literaturgeschichte” 333). These merchants used books to expand their limited formal education, i.e. to educate themselves (337).

⁴ Because the main reader figures of the novels that I will discuss are males, I will refer to the reader as ‘he.’

⁵ Bookseller (*Buchhändler*) in this period must be understood in a broader sense than just the salesman who sells books to the public. Bookseller meant all those who were part of the book trade (Raabe 289).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, book production and distribution rapidly increased. This increase meant an explosion, not only in the number of books produced, but also in the number of readers. Comparing the beginning to the end of the century, one can see an enormous difference in the number of books published. In the early seventeen-hundreds the book trade still had a relatively small audience, and traders felt comfortable estimating the demand for a certain book and calculating the number of copies that the public would buy (Wittmann, “Der gerechtfertigte Nachdrucker” 294). However, over the course of the century, drastic changes began to affect the trade: the audience rapidly grew in size and developed into a clientele that increasingly demanded much larger print-runs.

Numerous historians have documented the growth in book production and consumption at various moments in the century. Some like Schramm, focus on specific areas of the German-speaking world. Using Hamburg as his example, he discusses the increase in book production between 1740 and 1803 and its consequences in his article “Zur Literaturgeschichte der Lesenden” (338-39). And his *Neun Generationen: Dreihundert Jahre deutscher “Kulturgeschichte” im Lichte des Schicksals einer Hamburger Bürgerfamilie* (1964), uses the example of his own family to examine in detail the cultural history of the same population over an expanded time-frame between 1648 and 1948. Schramm’s student, Rolf Engelsing, adds Bremen to the discussion in *Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500-1800* (1974), and Paul Raabe provides numbers from the *Staatarchiv Wolfenbüttel* in “Der Buchhändler im achtzehnten Jahrhundert in Deutschland” (“Der Buchhändler” 282). Together, these works on various regions of the German-speaking world provide evidence for a general tendency of growth in book production and consumption, as summarized in Hiller’s book, which cites contemporary sources to compare the early and late seventeen hundreds (94). In another

study, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre* (1973), Engelsing explores the history of reading and literacy in the context of the book trade and their implications for school education in Germany. The purpose of my dissertation, however, will not be to analyze socio-historical facts, but to investigate their implications for the fictionally constructed reader in literary works of the period, including the emergence of a new genre, the *Bildungsroman*.

Two major factors contributed to the expansion in book production and the market. One came from within and the other from outside of the trade. The reason for low circulation prior to the late eighteenth century lay with the language used in publishing until that time. A majority of books had been written in Latin, which reduced the number of possible readers (Hiller 88). In addition to the shift from Latin to German in print media, however, technological innovations made works available to a larger public than before. Book printing thus became faster and allowed for longer runs. Nevertheless, these improvements influenced more than just the speed and the quantity of book production. The economic roles within the book trade became more clearly defined and differentiated. These concerned not only the physical aspects of production and distribution, such as publishers, editors, and book sellers, but authors and readers as well. Thus, participants in the trade, as well as producers and consumers of literature became, on the one hand, functionally differentiated, and on the other, more interdependent.

These developments allowed writers to become increasingly independent financially, which, in turn, resulted in their decreasing dependence on patronage. But they also therefore became more dependent on the sales of their books. Consequently, writers became increasingly dependent on the publishers who produced their books and the consumers who read them. Over time, technological advances in book production created a situation that called for more participation by writers in the process. As a result of various factors, including technological

advances in the publishing process and the possibility of reprints, book production became a business not only for the publisher, but also for the writer. Literary works came to be treated as intellectual property by the end of the eighteenth century (Bosse, *Autorschaft* 50, Kittler “Autorschaft” 150).

At the same time, the improvements contributed to a new and vital role for the reader. As books became more easily accessible to a larger readership, they also became an essential part of the communication between writer and reader on a fundamental level. In particular, the modern author received feedback from his reader through the number of books sold, which immediately indicated its success in contemporary circles. Furthermore, for the first time, the writer was compensated by his publisher based on sales. The measure of economic success was based upon high sales and multiple legal reprintings (Bosse, *Autorschaft* 13-14).

The ramifications of additional printings and piracy, however, were certainly not simple.⁶ Although this is not the place for a detailed discussion of the consequences of the new technologies, it is important to note, as Wittman does, that the problematic significance of pirated editions does not lie exclusively with legal questions, but also with novel possibilities and difficulties in the distribution of books (“Der gerechtfertigte Nachdrucker” 294). For the readership, an important aspect of pirated editions was the lower costs of illegal prints. These costs, in turn, allowed an even wider accessibility of print media for the general public. For the first time ordinary people were able to buy multiple books for themselves. Wittmann even argues that this situation ultimately affected readers’ horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*) (“Der gerechtfertigte Nachdrucker” 309-311, see also Hiller 95).⁷ However, the changes

⁶ See for this and further details Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century: The Social Background of Literary Revival*, 272-77.

⁷ This modification in readers’ expectations is discussed below, pp. 16ff.

included more fundamental consequences for the reader, including how and what people read, as well as how reading was taught.

1.2 READERSHIP

1.2.1 Intensive versus Extensive Reading

To begin tracing the development of reading over the eighteenth century, I will now consider Engelsing's discussion of intensive and extensive reading, which is my primary source for this topic (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 112-54).⁸ According to Engelsing, an immediate and well-known consequence of improvements in print technology was a burgeoning variety of books and the attendant replacement of intensive by extensive reading, which then witnessed significant additional changes in reading behaviors, as well as the content of books. As reading book after book (rather than just one book many times) became the new fashion, leisure time was eventually restructured among those classes that came out of an earlier oral tradition (Hiller 97). Within this tradition, only one kind of reading was known as intensive, which defines it as a repetitive activity. Before books were widely accessible, people owned just a few, such as the *Bible* and, perhaps, a handful of other religious texts:

Die äußeren Motive und Kennzeichen der intensiven Wiederholungslektüre waren, daß die meisten Bücher, die auch für einen allgemeinen Bedarf geeignet waren, nur in geringen Auflagen hergestellt und unzugänglich verteilt wurden und deshalb auch so teuer waren, daß selbst Bürger mit einigem Einkommen sie sich nicht leisteten. Währenddessen wurden einige wenige Titel [...] in großen

⁸ Numerous secondary sources refer to this transition in the readerly behavior (Mahoney, *Der Roman der Goethezeit*, 6; Bickenbach 3; Christa Bürger 195).

Auflagen gedruckt [...] empfohlen und allerorten billig verteilt. (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 123)

Because the same books were read over and over, we also find reinforced the instructional convention of memorization. Intensive reading often occurred in a setting where a person read aloud to a group. In this case reading coincided with listening. In other words, a person did not have to be literate in order to be involved in intensive reading. Furthermore, intensive readers, who became familiar with the content and form of the text through repetition, could confirm meanings that were already known, as well as attend to difficult details that might elude comprehension, thereby promoting a general Christian education (*Bildung*).⁹

Over the course of the eighteenth century, and in addition to the proliferation of print media, several factors made books more widely accessible to the general public. These included (on the side of reception) the wide-spread emergence of reading circles and lending libraries. Even if people did not have the financial means to buy more books, new organizations made them available (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 123), which gradually increased their access, not only to religious, but also to secular texts: “Bis weit hinein ins 18. Jahrhundert überwogen die geistlichen Schriften auf dem Büchermarkt und erst in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts trat darin eine Umkehr ein” (Hiller 90). By the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the content of books shifted from the religious to the secular, reading behaviors underwent a change. The increased accessibility of books and the greater variety of their content, moreover, had a direct impact on the expectations of readers.

In addition, the growth of circulating libraries (*Leihbibliotheken*) and the advent of reading circles (*Lesegesellschaften*) offered people a wide selection of reading material, thereby

⁹ This kind of reading has a strong connection to attendance at plays and will play an important role in the discussion of Goethe’s novel. See pp. 36 ff. below.

enabling them to read extensively for the first time. However, while extensive reading, which rapidly moves from book to book, typically occurs in solitude, these institutionalized forms of book circulation continued to provide readers with a community. Furthermore, while the community of extensive readers was different from the community of intensive readers, as Engelsing points out, intensive reading had not completely disappeared. Most readers, in fact, still expected to find an experience in extensive reading similar to the one they had found in intensive reading:

Der wahrscheinlich überwiegende Teil der Leser suchte auch durch extensive Lektüre ein und denselben Leseindruck durch neue Produkte zu wiederholen. Er war trotz des Wechsels der Titel auf andere Art und Weise ebenfalls dadurch ein Wiederholungsleser, daß er trotz ausgedehnter einmaliger Lektüre an einer bestimmten Thematik und Form festhielt und in einem neuen Buch das alte mit ähnlichen neuen Mitteln reproduziert sehen wollte. (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122)

In essence, readers still expected to repeat the same or similar reading experiences through newly printed products (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122-29).¹⁰ Intensive reading, therefore, actually became part of the process of extensive reading, and readers occasionally read certain books repeatedly, especially in literary circles. Indeed, references in private documents, especially correspondences, show that writers “Wert darauf legten, mehr als einmal gelesen zu werden, und es als Ehrenpunkt ansahen, daß es seitens der Verleger, Theaterintendanten und Kritiker so geschah” (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 129). Because extensive reading retained certain features of intensive reading, I will argue that Engelsing’s historical shift should be treated more as a transformation and modification of reading behaviors than as the replacement of an old way of reading with a fundamentally new one. At the same time, however, certain features of extensive reading changed drastically, including its social form. Thus, while intensive reading was concretely social, since it actually occurred in a group, extensive reading, which resulted in part

¹⁰ My discussion of a return to orality analyzes this trend in Chapter Three and Four.

from new social forms, such as circulating libraries and reading circles, became a solitary activity and individual experience. Yet solitude, as the main characteristic of the new kind of reading, would also establish its own collectivity by replacing an actual place of reading with the virtual space of all solitary readers.

1.2.2 Educational Reforms

The shift in reading behavior from intensive to extensive inevitably affected the reading instruction in schools as well. To understand what happened to the readership, we have to recognize the significance of educational reforms in Germany during the second half of the eighteenth century. The German school system, which had been established in the sixteenth century, operated without much change for centuries. Gawthrop remarks that “the survival of the primary school networks created in the sixteenth century” is exceptional, however, considering the long series of wars that Germany suffered (38). Despite unstable political situations, it was fortunate that the system was able to continue without major disruptions, as this allowed efforts to focus on educational reform during the eighteenth century. The resulting improvements affected the teachers and the curriculum, as well as the students.

Changes in cultural and social life during the last decades of the eighteenth century should not be treated separately, because any one area had an effect on all the others. In fact, the school system underwent major reforms after 1770, as Bosse describes in his article “Dichter kann man nicht bilden: Zur Veränderung der Schulrhetorik nach 1770” (1976). Reforms led to a redefinition of the general goal of education, which in turn produced dramatic changes in the curriculum. These changes, moreover, gradually affected primary and secondary education, as Bruford summarizes: “Reforms begun in the universities gradually made their influence felt in

the schools” (239). Due to improvements in book production that made books widely available, reading and writing gained attention in both people’s lives and the educational system. But there were still clear differences in education among the classes. According to Bosse, despite the widespread efforts of pedagogical reformers like Basedow, the spread of general education did not touch everyone. Although Basedow wanted his reforms to take immediate effect across all classes, at the outset general education was accessible mainly to the middle-class (Bosse, “Dichter” 86). Bosse might be correct in a statistical sense, but because of systematic political and pedagogical efforts, more and more people were exposed to the instruction of basic skills such as reading and writing across the social spectrum, even if institutional reforms took place slowly (Bruford 244).

In fact, reading and writing were no longer the skills of just the privileged: “In addition to providing more access to education, eighteenth-century governments also applied more pressure on parents to send their children to school,” according to Gawthrop, who adds: “[e]specially in the second half of the century, governments and private reformers disseminated leaflets addressed to peasant parents extolling the benefits of education” (42).¹¹ In this context Gawthrop also considers rising attendance as the most “obvious accomplishment” and “dramatic improvement” of eighteenth-century schooling (45). The “demand” that everyone should be able to read and write became a general one.¹² In short, while it remains problematic to talk about homogeneity and the overall high quality of general education across classes, efforts to educate a

¹¹ This dissertation does not have as goal a discussion of the changes in the education of the German peasant or any particular social class. For more on this topic, see John G. Gagliardo, *From Pariah to Patriot. The Changing Image of the German Peasant 1770-1840*.

¹² “As early as the 1604, Saxe-Gotha and Württemberg declared it obligatory for children to attend school. They were joined by most other German states in the course of the eighteenth century (Prussia in 1717, Saxony in 1772, Bavaria in 1802) [...] [The] enrollment figures indicate that, by the early nineteenth century, the vast majority of peasants were receiving the same basic education as that given to all but the elite elements of Germany’s middle classes. This narrowing of the cultural disparity between town and countryside was reflected in the similarity in books possessed by peasants and artisanal households” (Gawthrop 42-45).

reading public that expressed the program of the Enlightenment not only led to school reforms, but was also realized in the spread of print media, which had an effect on the entire social continuum. Consequently, the number of literate people grew rapidly or, at least, the number of illiterate people significantly decreased (Engelsing, *Analphabetentum* 64).

As another result of the reforms, instruction in writing increasingly emphasized general skills that served ordinary rather than poetic purposes. This change in emphasis, Bruford argues, also affected instructional methods, which henceforth shifted “from speaking and writing to reading and appreciating” (245). While revised writing instruction still constituted a significant component of the curriculum, instruction in reading gained more emphasis and, therefore, had to be restructured and reformed (Bosse, “Dichter” 81-86).

The professionalization of teachers, which began in the late eighteenth century in the wake of the increasing separation of church and school (Siegfried Schmidt 195), stimulated both practical and theoretical contributions to pedagogy. For the first time, teachers were instructed how to teach and how to assemble a curriculum for each subject. Under these circumstances, reading enjoyed a special status in general education (Gawthrop 44). In fact, as Bosse points out, according to contemporary works in theoretical pedagogy, reading became the primary goal of education for the first time (“Dichter” 88). Citing Basedow, Bosse goes on to argue that this new role had become programmatic: “Kein künftiger Bürger der gesitteten Stände muß die Schulen seiner Jugend verlassen, ohne ein mäßiger Freund der vernünftigen Lektüre geworden zu sein. Er muß also in den Schuljahren zur vermischten Lektüre fähig und bereitwillig gemacht werden” (Bosse, “Dichter” 87-88, Basedow; *Menschenfreude* 64, Nr. 41). After the publication of Basedow’s *Vorstellung an Menschenfreunde* in 1768, we find the interest in pedagogy heightened, precisely because the book had mapped out a new direction in schooling. It was

Basedow, moreover, who initiated a discussion in pedagogical circles concerning the transformation of intensive into extensive reading (Bosse, “Dichter” 88), with practical implications for education. Thus, educational reforms reflected the changes occasioned by the flourishing production of books. Instruction had to prepare students for the consumption of a great variety of books that would not necessarily be read again and again.

In addition to the general shift from writing to reading and the spread of extensive reading on the elementary level, the content of reading also changed. This did not, however, mean the complete disappearance of all sacred content from instruction. Children still regularly read religious stories and memorized Biblical verses. But, as Gawthrop relates, “[i]n the last quarter of the eighteenth century this religious reading was supplemented by collections of fairy tales and an early example of an all-purpose primer, Rochow’s *Kinderfreund*” (44). Furthermore, the new content of reading instruction led to an urgent need for a new type of preparation, which even theoretical works made thematic. As an example, Bosse refers to Köster’s pedagogical works that reinforced the importance of reading by suggesting that young people acquire life experience and knowledge of the world through books (Bosse, “Dichter” 105-6). During the Enlightenment, then, a series of changes ultimately altered the primary goal of formal education, which no longer should just train few poets and orators, but an entire public of readers (Bosse, “Dichter” 117). With literacy as a mechanism, the goal was to educate people to educate themselves (“*Erziehung zur Selbsterziehung*”) (Siegfried Schmidt 182).¹³ I will now take a closer look at what self-education meant for the reading public.

¹³ This is also the imperative of Kant’s answer to the question “Was ist Aufklärung?”: “Daß aber ein Publikum sich selbst aufkläre, ist eher möglich” (54).

1.2.3 The Birth of a New Readership

As the number of literate people dramatically rose during the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of active readers rose, too. Although this rise cut across all social classes, Engelsing identifies the middle-class of the period with the reading public. (Engelsing, *Analphabetentum* 64-65). This, in turn, affected not only readers but also writers. To understand the role that the book increasingly played in the relationship between author and reader, we need to examine the communication process from which it evolved. Which reading strategies, I want to ask, continued to depend on roles traditionally assigned to the listener. Before books became widely accessible, authors stood in direct contact with their audiences and, according to Bosse, remained the primary guarantors of the truth. Once widespread literacy and the appearance of print media undermined the oral tradition, writers and readers became alienated from each other. Consequently, by the end of the eighteenth century, texts replaced authors as transmitters of truth (Bosse, *Autorschaft* 14-17). Although it is arguable whether or not books possessed, or even gradually assumed, the function of transmitting the truth, we can still say, according to the contemporary view, that reading books offered knowledge in accord with experiences rooted in real life.¹⁴ Furthermore, the educational reforms, which strongly emphasized reading, also contributed to the “transition from oral tradition to highly interiorized literacy” (Gawthrop 46). Nevertheless, this remained a transitional period. Accordingly, Bosse argues that readers schooled in the tradition of the print media still maintained certain traits of listeners, including the kind of intensified alertness (“Zuhörer mit verstärkter Aufmerksamkeit”) that characterizes all oral settings. This newly constructed reader became the addressee of the

¹⁴ I will explore this in more detail in my discussion of Johann Adam Bergk’s view of reading below (pp. 23ff.)

author and, therefore, of the text. But the writer was still in a sense an orator whose task to teach, amuse, or move his readers remained the same, albeit within a different medium (Bosse, *Autorschaft* 20-21).

The gradual transition from oral presentation to silent reading and their coexistence is, in fact, integral to the history of reading. Erich Schön thus connects the reading practice that Engelsing calls intensive with reading aloud. In this mode, readers often memorized texts from the *Bible* or other religious books, reciting passages and giving texts a body through the human voice (35). Such reading was predominant in the ancient world and the middle ages (100), but it was not limited to religious topics. As readers' interests shifted from the religious to the secular, reading aloud was reserved for literature, especially poetry, whereas scientific texts were read silently. (102). Schön emphasizes that by the eighteenth century the oral reading of prose texts had disappeared altogether, although even then all genres were supposed to be read aloud (*Der Verlust* 103-4).¹⁵ Accordingly, loud and repeated reading (*Wiederholungslektüre*)¹⁶ belong together, and both disappear at the same time in the history of reading (109). Even if Schön claims to grasp the paradigmatic change in reading behavior better in terms of loud and silent reading than Engelsing's description of the shift from intensive to extensive reading, they both remain closely connected, as Zedelmaier emphasizes:

¹⁵ Even Goethe shared this opinion in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "Sollte jemand künftig dieses Märchen gedruckt lesen und zweifeln, ob es eine solche Wirkung habe hervorbringen können; so bedenke derselbe, daß der Mensch eigentlich nur berufen ist, in der Gegenwart zu wirken. Schreiben ist ein Mißbrauch der Sprache, stille für sich lesen ein trauriges Surrogat der Rede" (*FA*, Vol. 1/14, 486). As cited by Schüddekopf, Goethe explicates this idea in detail: "Und gewiß schwarz auf weiß sollte durchaus verbannt seyn; das Epische sollte rezitiert, das Lyrische gesungen und getanzt und das Dramatische persönlich mimisch vorgetragen werden" (15). All quotations from Goethe come from the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition of *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* (*Frankfurter Ausgabe*) and are cited as *FA*.

¹⁶ Schön differentiates between repeated and intensive reading. He distances himself from Engelsing's definition of intensive and extensive reading and rather works with the differentiation of phases in the history of reading based on the social form of reading (298-300).

Lesen konnte seit dem 9. Jahrhundert zunehmend still und visuell betrieben werden. Mit dem stillen Lesen etablierten sich neue Lektürenpraktiken. War die oralisierte Lektüre intensiv, langsam und auf die Aneignung weniger Bücher konzentriert, zudem auch physisch anstrengend, so ermöglichte das visuelle, stille Lesen ein schnelleres, effektiveres und extensiveres Lesen, dem wiederum Veränderungen der formalen Textgestalt korrespondierten. (13)

Unquestionably, a shift from oral to silent reading took place over the course of the eighteenth century, as Schön persuasively presents. But Zedelmaier also reminds us, both had coexisted since the Middle Ages: “Das lautlose Lesen verdrängte nicht das laute Lesen, das weiterhin nicht nur beim Vorlesen, sondern auch beim ‘Für-sich’-Lesen praktiziert wurde” (Zedelmaier 14). Along similar lines, Curran argues that the shift to silent reading did not mean the abrupt disappearance of orality by the end of the century.¹⁷ The two modalities of reading rather complemented each other during the period of the Enlightenment. But the question of the historical relationship between loud and silent reading is also connected to the larger, historical issue of the social forms of reading: “The Enlightenment is often characterized as the period in which reading, the principal tool of enlightenment, first became an exclusively private matter, but there are many indications of reading as a persistent, regular social activity continuing throughout the period” (696) Indeed, as Curran concludes, “silent, private reading can easily coexist with communal, oral reading. [...] The oral and the written do not suddenly take up opposing stances; instead, they achieve a relationship of interdependence, strengthened both by the Enlightenment’s promotion of rational discourse and public opinion, and by the improved availability of texts” (696-97).

¹⁷In *Der Verlust der Sinnlichkeit*, Schön suggests that over the eighteenth century solitary and silent reading replaced collective and oral reading. Curran emphasizes that Schön uses “Das Ende des lauten Lesens” as a chapter title (697). Interestingly, at the end of his book, Schön makes a gesture toward solitary reading (327). However, he does not address the inconsistency.

Curran's argument for the coexistence of loud and silent, as well as communal and private reading, will be important in my own reflections, which correlate the education of three fictional readers with the history of reading at the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, silent reading first established an intimate and secret relationship between the reader and the book, which in turn led to the emergence of privacy and intimacy (Chartier, "Frenchness" 327-8).¹⁸ Consequently, reading gradually developed into a highly personal and, therefore, solitary experience, which distinguished it from the oral tradition. However, reading was still taught to children as if it were within an oral tradition. This means that readers were primarily listeners in the early stages of acquiring the skill. According to Kittler, moreover, at the end of the eighteenth century a shift occurred within the family that influenced reading behavior along the following lines: the mother took over the supervision of the child's language acquisition, which meant the oralization of the alphabet, or reading aloud. Kittler argues that this happened, because reading was no longer a function of writing (*Aufschreibesysteme* 36-37). Indeed, in accordance with educational reforms, reading had acquired more importance than writing. Kittler also suggests that understanding through silent reading became material precisely because it produces meaning. This act then reversed the conventional chronology, as readers became writers ("Autorschaft" 151). That is to say, writing had become a function of reading.

Although the new readers shared some strategies with listeners, they also became isolated from each other and alienated from authors. Both qualitative and quantitative changes in the readership led to their anonymity. As this happened, moreover, authors were less able to predict the reaction of audiences (Siegfried Schmidt 351). And with the increasing isolation of the

¹⁸ See also "Das stumme Lesen und die mit ihm verbundenen Techniken der Buchgestaltung und -benutzung ermöglichten ein ungebundeneres, ein privateres und intimeres und auch: ein 'widerständigeres' Lesen" (Zedelmaier 13).

reader, more writers turned to a thematic concern that had sporadically appeared in the history of literature, including Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605/1615): they featured reading in literary works.

In 1799 one of the first guides for reading was published. Bergk's *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* instructed contemporary readers of Goethe, Novalis, and Tieck on what and how to read. Additionally, Bergk offered suggestions about which authors to read and provided descriptions of the different genres. As a translator, publisher and editor, journalist, and successful writer himself,¹⁹ Bergk saw reading as a critical part of *Bildung*. "Was giebt es nun für ein zweckmäßigeres Mittel, unseren Geist auszubilden, als Bücherlesen?", he asks in his preface, (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* v). Bergk then discusses the intellectual benefits of reading, exploring books, the reading process in general, and various authors of his time. He also comments on specific genres that, to his view, were proper and appropriate for reading, including novels. Bergk treats reading as an instrument that we can learn to use (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* v) and maintains that reading serves self-education by developing independent thinking and being (*Selbstthätigkeit*) and providing answers to all of our questions (3).

Bergk also emphasizes the role of self-reflection during the reading periods. The continuous internalization of content is necessary, he suggests:

Wir müssen das Buch, das wir lesen, durch unsere eigene Thätigkeit lebendig machen und zum Sprechen bringen [...] Wir müssen selbstthätig seyn und den Inhalt des Buches durch die Bewegungen unsers Gemüthes und durch die Thätigkeiten unsers Verstandes in uns erzeugen [...] (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 61)

Bergk emphasizes that readers must take responsibility and engage actively while reading. He then compares readers to actors or other artists whose reading requires the same kind of

¹⁹ Cf. Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* pp. 1-3 and Bergk, *Buchhändler* p. i.

engagement with the book: “Der Leser eines Buches muß das thun, was der Schauspieler, der Künstler, thut. [...] Was man also liest, muß man selbst in sich ins Leben rufen” (66-8). The power that is assigned to books of good quality is to awaken the genius of the reader: “Kunstwerke, die Produkte des Genies sind, haben das Eigene, daß sie wieder das Genie, wo es etwan im Schutte vergraben liegt, erwecken und ausbilden” (133). Thus actively engaged, the reader who incorporates the effect of the book, especially novels, gains valuable experiences without actually having to undergo them in real life: “Sie [Bücher] belehren daher uns, und nöthigen uns zum Nachdenken, indem sie uns köstliche und sauererworbene Erfahrungen darreichen [...] um uns die Kosten des mühseligen Selbsterfahrens zu ersparen und uns ohne eigenen Schaden, ohne blutige Reue, ohne nagenden Gram klug und weise zu machen” (205). Engelsing summarizes this tendency, which allowed reading to become a substitute for life, as follows:

Während es in der neueren Zeit ein seltenes Bekenntnis geworden ist, daß ein Bibliophile von sich sagen kann, er habe einen bestimmten Autor nicht gelesen, sondern gelebt, so kann man es noch für das 18. Jahrhundert als Regel betrachten, daß die bürgerlichen Leser ihre Bücher nicht bloß durchlasen, sondern durchlebten und sie als ein Erbe ansahen, das sie weiter zu vererben gedachten. (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 125)

Bergk also describes another trend of his time, referring to the new reading behavior: “wir können uns selten überwinden, eine zweite Lektüre von einem Buche anzufangen, dessen Hauptinhalt uns schon bekannt ist” (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 34). This suggests that by the turn of the nineteenth century extensive reading had become more dominant. The cause of this transition was the flourishing book trade, and one of its consequences was the rapid rise in the number of readers: “In Teutschland wurde nie mehr gelesen, als jetzt. Allein der größte Theil der Leser verschlingt die elendsten und geschmacklosesten Romane mit einem Heißhunger, wodurch man Kopf und Herz verdirbt” (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 411). We can clearly

hear in this quotation Bergk's critique about the quality of the books of his day.²⁰ However, he also highlights the fact that bad as well as good books can be educational (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 3, 34, 41).

We have seen how the availability of a variety of books fundamentally influenced readers' behaviors. First, a new kind of consumption of books took hold. Reading one book and moving on to the next one became typical. Second, the content of books shifted from sacred to secular topics. And finally, a new relationship to books evolved that incorporated them into life experiences. Additionally, the new reader and the new orientation to reading influenced writers, who felt challenged to address their needs: "Thousands, perhaps millions, of late eighteenth-century Germans, though continuing to be rooted in an essentially oral culture, also began to apply their reading skills to texts designed to meet the personal needs of this newly literate mass audience" (Gawthrop 46). As an inevitable response to such needs, new kinds of books emerged, in Raabe's words, a "handliche, leicht verständlich geschriebene Veröffentlichung für eine breitere Leserschicht, als es sie früher gegeben hatte" ("Der Buchhändler" 282). Raabe's examples include novels, books of poetry (*Gedichtsbücher*), and plays. The new readership, itself the outgrowth of social changes and technological advances, actively influenced and witnessed the production and organization of a new institution called literature. The *Bildungsroman*, I will argue, emerged from and reacted to the new type of reading that was the foundation of this institution.

²⁰ Compare to Goethe's remark in the "Vorspiel auf dem Theater" in *Faust*: "Zwar sind sie an das Beste nicht gewöhnt, Allein sie haben schrecklich viel gelesen" (*FA*, Vol. 1/7, 15).

1.3 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF LITERATURE AND THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

A fundamental requirement for the institutionalization of literature in Germany was the functional differentiation of professions that had become dominant during the late eighteenth century. The institution of art, according to Peter Bürger, implies both a general understanding of art in society and its functional requirements. These requirements, in turn, were defined, on the one hand, by the material relationship of art to its production and reception and by the patterns of the recipients' behavior on the other (Peter Bürger, *Vermittlung* 174-76). As writers became increasingly independent (Siegfried Schmidt 285), the recipients of their work gained more independence as well. But by the turn of the century writers and readers also became alienated from each other as a result of the separation of art and life (Christa Bürger 171). Consequently, a new alliance was required to unite them in a fundamentally new way. Accordingly, I will argue that the emergence of literature as a self-organizing system (Siegfried Schmidt 15-16), along with the increasing independence of readers, determined a new and complex relationship between them and texts. The novels under consideration address these issues by introducing protagonists as readers, showing the complex relationship between writers and readers, and revealing the intertwined nature of production and reception.

Scholarship on the *Bildungsroman* has come to a point where it no longer seems possible to find agreement on a universally acceptable definition of the genre.²¹ Instead, critics have tried to determine whether certain groups of novels share any defining features. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1794-96) (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), of course, has figured prominently in this discussion (Hardin ix, Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman* 9), although

²¹ A detailed history of the genre is to be found in Jacobs, Selbmann (*Der deutsche Bildungsroman*) and Kontje (*The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre*).

beyond acknowledging its foundational position, there is little consensus on its status as *Bildungsroman*. James Hardin goes even so far as to assert that the notion is not helpful at all (x).²²

Over the years *Bildungsroman* scholarship has nonetheless offered increasingly precise and explicit definitions. In practical terms this tendency has produced new selections and groupings for the novels (Hardin xvi-xx). Many of the categorizations are based on thematic criteria.²³ By contrast, Ratz argues that the *Bildungsroman* should be defined through narrative structures rather than themes. Such structures, he argues, have been determined by changes in the protagonist's identity through self-reflection ("Identitätsbewegung") (1).²⁴ Selbmann similarly defines the genre in terms of structure, i.e., as not dependent on the success of the protagonist's *Bildung* (*Der deutsche Bildungsroman* 40). Any successful definition of the *Bildungsroman*, he argues, must consider the figures of the narrator and reader as well (38-39). Agreeing with

²² To resolve their disagreements, scholars have introduced new names and different groupings of the *Bildungsroman*. But no one single trend in the research has taken hold. The diversity has been complicated by the different and interdisciplinary approaches, with a tendency to identify a group or subgroup of novels as *Bildungsroman* and then define them descriptively as a group. As Kontje concludes, because the *Bildungsroman* is a genre that depicts historical change, the range of interpretations has remained as diverse as the ways of defining change (*The German Bildungsroman* 111). Hardin discusses the scholarship regarding the terms that have variously been used to describe the *Bildungsroman*, such as *Entwicklungsroman*, *Erziehungsroman*, *Individualroman*, and novel of socialization (Hardin xvi-xx, Mahoney, "The Apprenticeship" 100). We also can add *Künstlerroman* and *Anti-Bildungsroman* to his list. The criteria of defining groups or subgroups of the *Bildungsroman* vary from content to historical criteria. One such an example is the term itself—*Bildungsroman*—which has become canonical, in spite of its vagueness.

²³ Definitions for the *Entwicklungsroman* ("novel of development") (Gerhard, Köhn) and the *Erziehungsroman* ("pedagogical novel") reveal a tendency to redefine *Bildung*. Dennis Mahoney captures the specific feature of the German *Bildungsroman*, as opposed to the European novel, by emphasizing its focus on the intellectual development and inner life of the main character ("The Apprenticeship" 99). Along similar lines, Steinecke suggests *Individualroman* ("individual-novel") as a term that is "not intellectually laden" and focuses on the individual ("The Novel" 94f). This then allows him to consider the role of the individual in the process of *Bildung* rather than the process itself. Focusing on the protagonist can also open other themes in the grouping, such as the role of art and artists. Thus, the term *Künstlerroman* offers Meuthen a connection with the *Bildungsroman* in his *Eins und doppelt oder vom Anderssein des Selbst*. At the same time, his selection expands the traditional reach of the genre. However, as Sammons points out, definitions of the *Bildungsroman* have often been based only on Goethe's *Meister*. Novels of the nineteenth century, understandably, do not fit that description ("The Mystery" 230). The *Bildungsroman*, therefore, is not a meaningful term.

²⁴ Ratz thus accepts the term *Individualroman* introduced by Steinecke ("Wilhelm Meister") as an appropriate name for the genre (Ratz 1-10).

Selbmann that these figures functionally help define the genre, I will show how the ongoing configuration of the protagonist as a reader in an important early group of the novels provides a common organizational principle.

The history and criticism of the *Bildungsroman* was determined by the reception of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* during the early Romantic period, especially by Tieck and Novalis. Kontje even characterizes the two later novels as reactions to Goethe's and attempts to rewrite his novel "in accordance with their own artistic belief" (*The German Bildungsroman* 13). That is to say, understanding the relationship of Goethe's novel to its Romantic successors is crucial to understanding the emergence of the genre. All three novels use reading as a vehicle to explore what *Bildung* means at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their understanding of *Bildung* is shaped by the changes in reading prompted by advances in book production of their time.

In an important departure from previous scholarship, Kontje also emphasizes the relationship between the genre and *Bildung*. The dissatisfaction with and failure of the genre to find an adequate definition, he argues, originates with the lack of a unified and universally accepted definition of *Bildung* (*The German Bildungsroman* 1), which has, in turn, changed since the time of Goethe, when *Bildung* referred to the role of the individual in society.²⁵ The term remains vague, however, too wide-ranging, and too general. It can refer to education, self-cultivation, intellectual development, and the formation of personality. But it can also be a collective name for the cultural and spiritual values of a group (Hardin xi-xii). Still, in order to define the *Bildungsroman*, a definition of *Bildung* is necessary. In Goethe's, Tieck's and Novalis' novels, I will argue, *Bildung* can additionally be understood as cultural production and

²⁵ Hardin provides a summary of possible meanings. Martini summarizes the history of the genre *Bildungsroman* and the term *Bildung* in his article. For more on the relationship between the genre and *Bildung* see Hardin's essay and Mahoney (*Der Roman* 46-56). Lämmert discusses examples of the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their protagonists in light of a changing understanding of *Bildung* as a concept.

reproduction. In this sense, the institution of literature becomes vital to the realization of *Bildung*, which manifests itself in the novels through a concept of reading that reproduces texts and produces meaning.

To understand the historical context in which the *Bildungsroman* emerged, it is necessary to mention changes to the novel over the course of the eighteenth century. During the second half of the century, according to Kayser, these included the reaction to the new readership. Readerly response demanded a more personal relationship with the narrator, which, in turn, led to the reader's incorporation into the narrative. Furthermore, the novel also provided readers with a reference to their own experiences for the first time (17-24) by reflecting contemporary pedagogical trends and by implying that reading can complement, or even replace, experience.

My investigation will be guided by questions posed by Mahoney ("The Apprenticeship") and Kontje (*The German Bildungsroman* and *Private Lives*) in their investigations of the *Bildungsroman*. Kontje's and Mahoney's arguments serve as points of departure as I discuss Goethe's, Tieck's, and Novalis's novels and show in detail how reading is constructed in them. Kontje argues that the *Bildungsroman* during the Age of Goethe and Romanticism must be examined "in terms of the changing function of the institution of literature in German society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" ("The German Bildungsroman" 142). In his 1992 book, he develops the details of this thesis, which claims that the *Bildungsroman* can be defined as a genre through its focus on the function of the institution of literature. In his discussion, Kontje considers the readerly function, as well as the changing role of the writer. His argument, however, does not go beyond social and financial terms. Mahoney takes the discussion further by considering the relationship of the early *Bildungsroman* specifically to the reader, arguing that Goethe's *Lehrjahre* and its Romantic successors formed a new readership "by

means of innovative and daring narrative strategies” (“The Apprenticeship” 101). But he offers little beyond posing the question and showing that it applies to a series of novels within.

Analyzing the readerly function in the *Bildungsroman* at the turn of the nineteenth century will confirm that this typically German form is unthinkable without considering the emergence of a modern readership in Germany. A common goal of Goethe’s, Tieck’s and Novalis’s novels, I will argue, was to shape readers by providing a paradigm of reading. My analysis will show that as a prominent thematic focus of the novels, reading was employed as an organizational device. By featuring their protagonists as readers and analyzing reading processes, the three novels provided models for their own readers. That is, they suggested a reading strategy for real readers based on the way their protagonists deal with reading.

The approach of reception theory to the *Bildungsroman* has been more historical than textual (see Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman* 62-69). Secondary literature on reading, readers, and reader response, both in general and at the turn of nineteenth century, does not investigate fictionally constructed readers and their relationship to real readers.²⁶ An investigation of this relationship is necessary for a new understanding of the genre at the time of the rise of the reading public. Fictional readers in these novels established a new collective form of reading that would replace the communality lost with the waning of intensive reading. The purpose of the three novels, I will argue, is to step outside of their own fictions and discover a community within the solitude of reading. The novels achieve this when their protagonists search for their own readerly communities.

Analyzing three early examples of the *Bildungsroman* in the context of the history of reading will help us to understand the role played by social and economic changes in the

²⁶ I will call the readers of the novel real readers (compare Iser 52)

thematic and structural organization of the genre. It will also aid us in elaborating the relationship between reading and *Bildung*. Conversely, analyzing the changing function of the reader figure and the reading process in these novels, will enhance to our understanding of the changes in reading behavior at the end of the century and to our understanding of how contemporary prominent writers reacted to those changes. Accordingly, the focus of my investigation will be the reader and his text in the context of specific reading situations and their consequences. The novels under consideration construct the act of reading as a process by shifting their focus from storytelling and the story to its reception. This shift happened in the context of the history of books, i.e., the history of reading. By conceptualizing reading in this way, the novels shaped readers and, thereby, took part in the institutionalization of literature. Portraying fictional readers promoted a better understanding of the changing function of reading, as such fictionalized subjects relate to and provide concrete examples of a new type of reader. Furthermore, in the early modern period, reading and living stood in close relationship to each other (Darnton 157). Along similar lines, understanding and constructing texts in the early *Bildungsroman* means making sense out of life. Thus, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* share moments of reflexivity that feature a protagonist who can recognize himself in a text or an artifact. Through the course of the novels, their protagonists become readers of texts that reflect on their lives and provide their metaphorical representations as heroes.

Traditionally, investigations of reading and the function of readers have focused on the relationship between literary texts and real readers. Furthermore, the reception of literary texts has often been understood as the interaction between texts and readers. However, in these interactions, only the reader takes an active role, while the text remains subordinate as an object

of reading (Schön, *Der Verlust* 23). Accordingly, when speaking about reception, we must shift our focus to the reader. In light of the reading roles of the protagonists in the three novels, then, we should address the following questions: What are the protagonists' shared characteristics and differences as reader figures? What are their relationships to the stories about their lives, and what is the role of these stories in their development as readers? What are the relationships between the embedded narratives in the novels and their structures as a whole? And how do the protagonists respond to texts?

The early *Bildungsroman* presents its protagonist consuming written texts and orally narrated stories. Understanding them as fictional readers allows us to investigate readerly behaviors in fiction and their relationship to contemporary tendencies in the history of reading. The novels under consideration follow the unfolding of a reading process in which interactions take place between texts (embedded narratives) and fictional readers. Furthermore, the impact of such reading on these readers determines the story-line of each novel, where the impact of the embedded narratives is crucial to the main character's life and decisions. In addition to examining the historical understanding of reading, my investigation considers its phenomenological conceptualization as well. What does reading mean and how is it constructed in the novel? The three novels show their protagonists as reader figures and the effect of texts on them and their lives. In order to understand the significance of reading for the process of *Bildung*, I will first analyze the behavior of the protagonists in the various reading situations that they confront.

2.0 WILHELM MEISTERS LEHRJAHRE

Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96) presents numerous situations in which its protagonist, Wilhelm, becomes involved with the reception of literary texts and other stories. Goethe's prototypical *Bildungsroman* thus poses a number of questions about its own relationship to the history of reading, as well as the epochal changes in reading at the end of the eighteenth century and the process of reading as presented in fiction in general. Furthermore, the *Lehrjahre* makes its own readers aware of themselves as readers and their reading process by featuring a reading figure as its protagonist. In this chapter, I argue that the novel reinvents the reading process by combining ongoing and past tendencies from the history of reading.¹

¹ Although the secondary literature acknowledges the role of reading in Goethe's novel, the topic has not been conceptually researched or, at most, remains limited to comments such as this: "Wilhelm Meister ist der lesende und belesene Held, dessen Einbildungskraft unermüdlich Deutungsmuster literarischer Herkunft reproduziert und die Welt hineinträgt" (Südoff 17-18) or "Erstens macht Wilhelm seine 'Erfahrungen' wieder nur in der Literatur, und das Lesen kann das eigene religiöse Erleben schwerlich ersetzen" (Gerth 20). This type of critical gesture appears as early as Lehmann's brief note in his 1916 article that reading Shakespeare inspires Wilhelm to learn about the real world in order to have a greater effect on the audience as an actor (119). More recently, Michael Minden acknowledged, along similar lines, that Wilhelm is implied as a reader in the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* in the sixth chapter of the novel (40). More involved and compelling analyses of Wilhelm as reader appear from time to time in the scholarship. Due perhaps to the rich variety of forms, however, critics have often treated the various reading events in the novel as separate and disconnected. Wuthenow, for example, explores reader figures in different novels across national literatures and limits his short chapter on Goethe's *Meister* to the role of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the *Theatralische Sendung*. He recognizes the role of reading in the configuration of Wilhelm's character, but he does not develop his interpretation beyond the statement that Wilhelm is a hero who reads (74-86). Most of the other interpretations of the reader focus on the *Lehrjahre*, however. Kurth thus studies novels in the eighteenth century in her book, *Die zweite Wirklichkeit* (1969), claiming that many, including *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, present a protagonist who creates a second reality through his readings. This reality matches neither the reality within the novel, nor the fiction of what I call the embedded texts, but substitutes for them with a third entity. In her *Wilhelm Meister* chapter, Kurth argues that confronting reality disillusion and disappoints Wilhelm (217-220). Similarly, Kontje explores the *Bildungsroman* in his book, *Private Lives and Public Sphere* (1992) and argues that the genre features reading as an activity that transforms reality (11). Kontje describes Wilhelm's apprenticeship as "the fictionally inspired wanderings of the hero in the secular closure of classical aesthetics" (6). He suggests that the protagonists of these novels resemble their authors, as both have been shaped by their reading experiences (8). Although Kontje treats the novels as metafictional texts, his focus is more on "the authors' relations with the public" (7), and this is partially the focus of his *Wilhelm Meister* chapter as well. Similar considerations lead Voßkamp to suggest that late twentieth century novels written in the tradition of Goethe's

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre follows Wilhelm's education about reading by placing him in situations that vary in terms of the content of the readings and his reading as a fictitious reader who consumes texts. That is to say, Wilhelm's character is constructed as the study of a reader who represents various readerly roles that reflect changes in reader behaviors over time. Wilhelm reads a variety of different genres, from drama through narrative fictions to images. Particular genres involve different expectations for their readers. Wilhelm's behavior often shows how he meets and modifies these expectations, e.g. how he fulfills the highest expectation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by staging it in a free adaptation that realizes his readerly interpretation of the play.

With reading as its central theme, the novel conceptualizes the historical development of the reader and his role in literary production by assigning the fictitious reader a major role. As Wilhelm's story develops, in fact, the novel becomes the realization of his own reading process. Furthermore, as the real readers of the novel find themselves confronted with a reader figure and his reading process, they are provided with roles and models for their own reading. In addition to different modes that address and problematize the historical shift from intensive to extensive reading, the novel presents a range of social forms of reading that extend between the two poles of reading as a sociable act and the isolation of silent reading. And as Wilhelm explores the

Lehrjahre constantly reflect upon storytelling ("Wilhelm Meisters 'Theatralische Sendung'" 171). This thesis is the starting point for his discussion of works by Botho Strauß and Thomas Bernhard. Similar thinking about self-reflection leads Meuthen to note the overlap of Goethe's novel with its own fictional world. This overlap is manifested in the shared title of the novel and the scroll "containing" the fictional biography of Wilhelm. Meuthen highlights the moment when Wilhelm reads the scroll, his own apprenticeship, and sees it as the juncture of what I call the real reader's reality and the fictionality of the novel. This encounter culminates in Wilhelm's attempt to rewrite his story, which Meuthen understands as a functional description of art that ultimately legitimates the novel (*Eins und doppelt* 94). Some of the research concerned with the reader investigates the relationship of Goethe's novel with real readers. Storz, in his article "Wieder einmal die 'Lehrjahre'" investigates the effect of the novel on the (actual) reader and identifies a web of repetitive motives and returning figures in the novel. Mahoney takes a similar starting point in his article, "The Apprenticeship of the Reader" and shifts the focus from the content of the *Bildungsroman* to its intended effect upon real readers. Although he discusses *Bildung* in a number of different novels, he talks sparingly about the *Lehrjahre* and mentions only in passing that Wilhelm's *Bildung* is based on the "medium of literature" (112).

space between intensive and extensive reading in various social settings, the path of his *Bildung* as a reader also shifts between genres, moving from dramatic to narrative texts. This transition, I conclude, coincides with his development as a writer, which in turn raises questions about the relationship of reading to writing. That is, what kind of role does reading play for Wilhelm in the process of his becoming a writer?

2.1 BETWEEN INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE READING

Three thematic concerns of the novel, which also are stations of Wilhelm's development, reflect contemporary trends in reading. They consider the protagonist, chronologically, reading Biblical stories, staging theater productions, and reading the life-stories of others as well as his own. The shift from intensive to extensive reading over the course of the eighteenth century legitimated the reader and the act of reading as a subject of contemporary discourse. During this period, we increasingly find theorists who want to educate a new readership by making it aware of reading behaviors and by suggesting reading strategies. Thus, Basedow turned contemporary *Lesewut* (reading mania) into a pedagogical agenda in his *Vorstellung an Menschenfreunde* (1768), and Bergk discussed the art of reading and its relationship to thinking in both *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* (1799) and *Die Kunst zu denken* (1802). This theoretical discourse in turn influenced literature. I argue, along these lines, that Goethe's *Bildungsroman* investigates reading in terms of its historical roots and contemporary trends by exploring the relationship of intensive and extensive reading, not as a simple opposition, but rather in terms of a complex process of transition. This spectrum allows for the variety of reading roles that Wilhelm assumes in the novel, including solitary reader, *Vorleser*, actor, and director.

2.1.1 The Theater as a Place for Reading

Early in the novel, a number of the situations in which Wilhelm reads connect in various ways to the world of the theater, which plays a significant role in Wilhelm's *Bildung* as a modern reader. The theatrical setting allows him to explore the relationship between the intensive and extensive modes of reading, as well as to experience the transition from the former to the latter. The theater motif, which originates in the *Theatralische Sendung* (1777-85),² reappears in the *Lehrjahre*, where according to Greiner, its significance and functions have changed: "*Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*," Greiner argues, "stellt einen Versuch vor, eine Selbstbegründung des modernen Subjekts von der ästhetischen Welt her zu leisten und die Geschichte dieses Subjekts dadurch erzählbar zu machen, daß sie als Theater-Roman gestaltet wird" (281). However, Greiner emphasizes that the theater is not the goal in the *Lehrjahre*, but points beyond itself as an instrument (296). I take Greiner's point regarding the *Theatralische Sendung* to be relevant for the final version of the novel, too. By constructing it as a story about theater, Goethe facilitates a

² I treat *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as a coherent text and will forgo a detailed discussion about its differences with the *Theatralische Sendung*. The meaning and importance of Wilhelm's experience with the theater, of course, change in the *Lehrjahre*. Thus, according to Roberts, "Wilhelm's theatrical adventures and misadventures now become part of a larger plan, whose guiding force is the 'Turmgesellschaft'" ("Wilhelm Meister and Hamlet" 65). Roberts also points out other additions to the *Lehrjahre* that connect the beginning of the book (originating from the *Sendung*) and the end of the book (constituting the *Lehrjahre*) ("Wilhelm Meister and Hamlet" 66). Similarly, Lehmann argues that the *Sendung* was revised under new goals: "Mit großer Feinheit und Sorgfalt ist der Dichter dabei verfahren, um die Einheit der ursprünglichen Dichtung dem neuen Zweck gemäß umzugestalten" (118). Lehmann claims that the direction of the *Lehrjahre* actually controverts the tendencies in the *Sendung* (121). For more on the two versions of the novel see Lehmann "Anton Reiser und die Entstehung des Wilhelm Meister," Kurth, *Die zweite Wirklichkeit: Studien zum Roman des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Ammerlahn "Goethe und Wilhelm Meister, Shakespeare und Natalie: Die klassische Heilung des kranken Königssohns," Roberts "Wilhelm Meister and Hamlet: The Inner Structure of Books III of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*," and Wuthenow *Im Buch die Bücher oder der Held als Leser* (74-86). In addition, Kontje highlights some differences in his *Private Lives in the Public Sphere* (51-78). See also Greiner's "Puppenspiel und Hamlet-Nachfolge: Wilhelm Meisters 'Aufgabe' der theatralischen Sendung," Dye's article "Wilhelm Meister and *Hamlet*, Identity and Difference," and Meuthen's chapter on *Wilhelm Meister* in his book *Eins und doppelt oder Vom Anderssein des Selbst: Struktur und Tradition des deutschen Künstlerromans* (73-94).

narrative that in turn shapes the story of the search for the self.³ That is to say, the theater provides a basis for the narrative of Wilhelm's *Bildung* as a reader and connects this process not only to the history of reading, but also to the development of a national readership. And it thereby also allows for the exploration of a wide range of reading roles and strategies.⁴

In terms of reading, all theatrical participants, including actors, directors, and the audience, together constitute reading behavior in its entirety, as well as the reciprocal relationship between production and reception. Thus, director and actors together produce an interpretation, which is a new text offered for the audience to read. Theater, including the child's *Puppenspiel*, represents a means of *Bildung* for those involved in theatrical productions (actors, directors, etc), as well as those involved with their reception (audience or readers).⁵ And while its function in the *Lehrjahre* has been a subject of debate,⁶ it is clear that the theater plays a major role in the novel. By looking at the theater motif in terms of the history of reading, I

³ Although Wilhelm and the Society of the Tower eventually reject his involvement with *Hamlet* as a mistake, the story of Wilhelm's theater-days remains a crucial part of his *Bildung* and a major part of the novel. The *Lehrjahre* retained parts of the *Theatralische Sendung*, in particular the Shakespeare production, without changes. However, Goethe rewrote and changed the main plot (Paulin 186).

⁴ Selbmann connects the emergence of the bourgeois theater and the *Bildungsroman*. He draws attention to a new pedagogical function of the theater during the Enlightenment: "[e]r [der Bildungsbegriff] hängt eng zusammen mit dem Vollkommenheitsideal einer neuen Pädagogik im Gefolge der Aufklärung und damit auch mit dem Aufstieg eines pädagogisch wirkenden bürgerlichen Theaters" (*Theater im Roman* 11). Thus, the theater demands a general education and even affects politics. Selbmann continues, "[e]in so verstandenes Nationaltheater, das getragen wird vom gebildeten Teil des bürgerlichen Publikums, erhebt mit dem Bildungsanspruch auch politische Forderungen gegenüber dem kleinstaatlichen Absolutismus" (18). Later, Selbmann returns to the pedagogical function of the theater and refers to a contemporary essay about the theater by Johann Jakob Christian von Reck: "Statt in einer nur unterhaltenden Funktion sieht Reck die Aufgabe des Theaters als ein Bildungsmittel im Dienste der Erziehung der Jugend: 'Das Theater könnte zuverlässig das schicklichste Mittel seyn, junge Leute frühzeitig mit der Welt bekannt zu machen'" (25).

⁵ Wilhelm expresses the same idea at the very beginning of the novel, when he extols the theater as entertainment, enlightenment, and ennoblement: "Wenn man noch so lange warten muß, so weiß man doch, er [der Theatervorhang] wird in die Höhe gehen, und wir werden, die mannigfaltigsten Gegenstände sehen, die uns unterhalten, aufklären und erheben" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 362).

⁶ Meuthen claims, based on biographical sources, that Goethe intended his novel to show the emerging institution of a national theater and its power to provide *Bildung* for all social classes and to develop a cultural consciousness for the nation (*gesamtdeutsches Kulturbewusstsein*). However, he concludes that despite this plan, the novel demonstrates the failure of this effort (*Eins und doppelt* 73). Others highlight Wilhelm's theatrical ambitions as mistaken. See Michelsen's "Wilhelm Meister Reads Shakespeare" (22) and Delong's "Reflections on a Remarkable Performance of *Hamlet*: A Re-examination of the *Hamlet* Scene in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*" (80).

propose to examine the relationship between reading and *Bildung*. Furthermore, the stage represents a bridge between author and audience and unites production and reception.

Wilhelm's interest in the theater leads to two types of reading and prepares him for reading outside of the theater. The first, which is characteristic of his childhood, involves canonical texts—not meant originally for the stage—such as the *Bible* and Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1580). In both instances, the connection with the theater stems from Wilhelm's compulsion to dramatize narrative texts. In other words, texts embedded within the novel inspire Goethe's protagonist to deliver interpretations through performance. The second kind of reading related to acting originates with Wilhelm's explicit turn to the theater. His involvement with theatrical troops as an actor inspires him to read plays, most importantly Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. And following his experiment with the theater, he will read narratives again, specifically, biographies, which will further engage him as writer and mark the end of his apprenticeship as a reader.

Already as a young child, Wilhelm found himself reading. Interestingly, these early situations retell and reflect upon the history of reading. The first such experience in Wilhelm's life comes with the puppet theater. As a child, he staged Biblical stories with puppets for entertainment: "Es waren die ersten vergnügten Augenblicke, die ich in dem neuen leeren Hause genoß" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 362). Because the puppet theater is connected to reading, it becomes a productive experience for Wilhelm from the outset, illustrating active engagement on his part as a reader. His positive evaluation of the episode is significant, moreover, because his childhood reading habits will mark the path of future reading.

The puppet show does this by preparing and establishing Wilhelm's later passion for theater, initially as a spectator and eventually as an actor and stage director. But it also initiates

the kind of intensive reading that I discussed in the previous chapter as a significant moment of the early modern period. Wilhelm's reading of Biblical stories like David and Goliath recalls a topic typical of intensive reading, which typically involved religious texts. And as often happens with intensive reading, which returns its reader to a few texts over and over again, Wilhelm learns this story by heart. Later, his mother remembers with joy the first time this happened:

Ich weiß, wie du mir das Büchlehen entwendetest und das ganze Stück auswendig lerntest, ich wurde es erst gewahr, als du eines Abends dir einen Goliath und David von Wachs machtest, sie beide gegen einander perorieren ließest, dem Riesen endlich einen Stoß gabst und sein unförmliches Haupt auf einer großen Stecknadel mit wächsernem Griff dem kleinen David in die Hand klebstest. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 364)

Clearly Wilhelm's passion for Biblical storytelling was motivated more by a personal interest in declamation than religious passion. This redirection of readerly desire, however, marks a transformation of intensive reading. According to the mother's recollection, Wilhelm's childhood interest in the Biblical text was fueled by the prospect of the game. As confirmed by his mother's report, he was so moved by the story that he turned his reading experience into a playful memory exercise.

When Wilhelm recalls the same scene, he further elaborates the circumstances and mechanics of his early reading and their effects on him. His reflection also reveals new directions in his personal story, while more broadly encapsulating changes in the history of reading:

Von der Zeit an wandte ich alle verstohlenen einsamen Stunden darauf, mein Schauspiel wiederholt zu lesen, es auswendig zu lernen, und mir in Gedanken vorzustellen, wie herrlich es sein müßte, wenn ich die Gestalten dazu mit meinen Fingern beleben könnte. Ich ward in meinen Gedanken selbst zum David und zum Goliath. In allen Winkeln des Bodens, der Ställe, des Gartens, unter allerlei Umständen, studierte ich das Stück ganz in mich hinein, ergriff alle Rollen, und lernte sie auswendig [...] So lagen mir die großmütigen Reden Davids, mit denen er den übermütigen Riesen Goliath herausforderte, Tag und Nacht im Sinne; ich murmelte sie oft vor mich hin. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 371-72)

Wilhelm's reading here is still intensive: he reads, memorizes, and watches his own dramatized story of David and Goliath several times. While his recollection shows the trademarks of intensive reading, however, it reveals even more. Thus, Wilhelm does not stop with reading a single text over and over again. As often happens in intensive reading, he memorizes passages and, moved by his imagination, he adapts the Biblical story for the puppet stage. Acting out the struggle between David and Goliath, in turn, prompts his identification, not just with the main character David, but interestingly, with Goliath as well. Thus, his reading has finally merged him with the text through his thorough study of it ("studierte in mich hinein"). No longer a religious experience, Wilhelm's reading has become physical, intellectual, and aesthetic, involving both fingers and thoughts.

Already in the first book of the novel, Wilhelm appears as a reader who typically reflects upon his own reading practices, thereby also drawing the real readers' attention to the process in general. His first memories of reading, moreover, show that it was already a nuanced event: "Hatte ich das erstemal Freude der Überraschung und des Staunens, so war zum zweitenmale die Wollust des Aufmerkens und Forschens groß" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 369). By reading the same texts more than once, Wilhelm learned that rereading can have a cumulative effect with each repetition. His recollected descriptions of the emotions and attitudes show the effect that reading situations can produce. Watching a performance for a first and then second time, makes clear that they had a formative impact on him as a child. Furthermore, the passage personalizes certain general features of intensive reading, thereby enhancing the sense of reality. Even this kind of reading, of course, must start with a new text, which, as we learn, became an immediate source of joy. Moreover, Wilhelm's description of his initial encounter with David and Goliath specifically attributes his surprise and astonishment to the novelty content, which will become a

feature of extensive reading. The repetitions of intensive reading, it would seem, must look for different receptions with each successive reading. That is to say, although repetitive readings engage the same text, they must also typically produce new reading experiences. In this light, Wilhelm describes himself as someone whose intellectual curiosity comes into play only on a second reading. As I will show, this dynamic of intensive reading will play an important role in his subsequent reading as a stage director, who must function as an intensive reader at all times.

As Wilhelm matures, we can notice other changes in his reading practices. Importantly, however, while he eventually outgrows intensive reading, he continues to exhibit some of its most important features as he consumes multiple, rather than just few texts. The theater will become a metaphor, in part, for intensive reading, as theatrical production involves, by its nature, repetition. But as with the shift from biblical plays to opera and epic poems, Wilhelm's theatrical involvement will also witness a shift in his interest from the religious to the secular, which additionally suggests a movement toward extensive reading. The theater, in other words, serves as a pivot for Wilhelm between these two kinds of historical reading practices. Even as he pursues his theatrical dream, Wilhelm is driven to find more and more books to read. Thus, with both intensive and extensive reading simultaneously at work, Goethe's novel appears to focus on the region between the two, although with Wilhelm's obsession with reading and finding new books, we also increasingly find extensive reading presented on a personal level in terms of the historical *Lesewut*.⁷ Already as a child, we learn, Wilhelm was an insatiable reader: "ich weiß aber wohl, daß ich nicht einschlafen konnte, daß ich noch etwas erzählt haben wollte" (FA, Vol.

⁷ Wittmann quotes from a Viennese writer (1781) who described the reading behavior of chambermaids: "Hiermit noch nicht zufrieden, spielen sie auch die Rollen der Empfindsamen, machen Anspruch auf die Schöngesterei, lesen fleißig Komödien, Romane, Gedichte, lernen ganze Szenen, Stellen oder Strophen auswendig und räsonnieren sogar über die Leiden des jungen Werther" ("Gibt es eine Leserevolution" 430). This report nicely summarizes Wilhelm's reading behavior across a variety of genres.

1/9, 368). Reading mania describes a newly experienced behavior (of real readers) in Germany during the late eighteenth century, when the obsessive consumption of books resulted from and fed the burgeoning publishing industry.⁸ Accordingly, Wilhelm, who soon becomes bored with David and Goliath, looks to other books for new excitement:

Ich hatte kaum das erste Stück, wozu Theater und Schauspieler geschaffen und gestempelt waren, etlichemal aufgeführt, als es mir schon keine Freude mehr machte. Dagegen waren mir unter den Büchern des Großvaters die deutsche Schaubühne und verschiedene italienisch-deutsche Opern in die Hände gekommen. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 374)

Like Faust,⁹ Wilhelm finds that consumption actually feeds a desire (to read).¹⁰ Nevertheless, his primary use of books has not changed, and they continue to promote his involvement with the theater. He therefore turns to his grandfather's library and finds *Die deutsche Schaubühne* (*The German Stage*), an anthology of contemporary plays (1740-45), as well as Italian and German operas. Wilhelm consciously selects theatrical texts, since during childhood, reading meant performing for him. And this tendency remains characteristic for him even as a young adult. The selections from *Die deutsche Schaubühne* (*The German Stage*) are well suited for adaptations to the puppet theater, and they also contribute to the shift in Wilhelm's reading. While the topics of

⁸ Wilhelm's obsession with reading is closely connected to the theater. It is not a coincidence that Selbmann talks about a similar behavior regarding the theater around the same time. He calls it "Theatromanie" (obsession with theater), revealing a general tendency in the consumption of art (*Theater im Roman* 19). The relationship between theater and reading is close. Thus, Minden refers to the *Lesedrama* (drama), characteristic for the time, as a bridge that connects the theater and the reading public (22). Boyle argues for the important role of the *Lesedrama* in the education of a reading public in "Das Lesedrama: Versuch einer Ehrenrettung." He shows that printed plays were widely accessible and read in the mid eighteenth century in Germany before the novel conquered the reading public. The printed play combined the private reading experience with an imaginary theatrical experience, which was collective (60-65). For Wilhelm, reading and performing theatrical texts begins with a solitary reading situation that culminates within a community. For more on the social aspect, see pp. 60ff. below.

⁹ Compare to Goethe's *Faust*: "Doch hast du Speise die nicht sättigt" (FA, Vol. 1/7, 75, line 1978).

¹⁰ Although this dissertation's primary focus is the main protagonist, reading mania catches other characters in the novel as well. Therese's short comment enlightens her own, Lydia's and her mother's reading habit sharing some similarities with Wilhelm's (FA, Vol. 1/9, 837). Aurelie shares some of the reading experiences with Wilhelm. She reads Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and they play together. They also read *Die Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* together, which I will discuss later. Even the Beautiful Soul, the author of the *Bekenntnisse*, is a reader. Other characters are also presented as readers (FA, Vol. 1/9, 600). Philine and Friedrich share some reading experience (FA, Vol. 1/9, 938-39). Even Mignon, whose repetition in the secondary literature is that she cannot read (Meuthen, *Eins und doppelt* 76), finds herself in reading situations (FA, Vol. 1/9, 849).

the plays are still largely biblical, moreover, the opera introduces new erotic and melodramatic themes, which are secular and introduce Wilhelm to popular literature. Such texts prompt his reading to change significantly, and he moves toward extensive reading by consuming a variety of books.

As already noted, Wilhelm shows a deep interest not only for plays, but also for narratives, such as romances and epic poetry, early on. Thus, in the case of “das Lesen alter Romane” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 377), the narrator recalls, he eventually uncovers a copy of Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered* in his father’s home, which then serves as a bridge to extensive reading. Of further significance here is a movement toward secular topics, which emerges from religious discourse, but then transforms it as Tasso’s poem, which portrays a conflict between Christians and Muslims on the historical and secular stages. Because the epic is not primarily theological in orientation, moreover, it became an important item in private libraries and entered the literary canon of the well-educated middle-class (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 1182). Yet Wilhelm talks about Tasso’s work as a novel—not in the modern sense, but as a narrative—and while it introduces him to the epic form,¹¹ he still reads it intensively, as he reads Biblical narratives, by memorizing important passages: “es waren Stellen, die ich auswendig wußte” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 378). And he takes these passages as a basis for a performance in his puppet theater.

Upon maturing and leaving his puppet stage behind, Wilhelm, nevertheless, remains connected to the world of the theater through his erotic involvement with the actress Mariane, who performs with an itinerant theater group. This relationship provides him with access to the backstage, which recalls his earlier interest in the mechanics and techniques of the puppet theater

¹¹ Blanckenburg’s *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), a contemporary theoretical work on the novel, compares the modern novel to the Greek epics. He argues that the novel could and should fulfill a similar function as epic poetry had for the ancient, especially regarding the entertainment of an audience (xiii-xiv).

and prepares him for his subsequent production of *Hamlet*. Although we do not see Wilhelm reading during this phase of his life, the relationship of reading to the theater remains important. In fact, the protagonist's love for Mariane, and through her for the theater, is connected in a number of ways to the larger issue of reading.¹² First of all, Wilhelm's presumed destiny for the stage, fuelled by his physical attraction for the young actress, reinforces a determination to join the theater himself:

Seine Bestimmung zum Theater war ihm nunmehr klar; das hohe Ziel, das er sich vorgesteckt sah, schien ihm näher, indem er an Marianens Hand hinstrebte, und in selbstgefälliger Bescheidenheit erblickte er in sich den trefflichen Schauspieler, den Schöpfer eines künftigen National-Theaters, nach dem er so vielfältig hatte seufzen hören. (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 386)

The narrator's ironic tone here undermines Wilhelm's theatrical ambitions. Although he sees himself as a successful actor, whose work will serve the nation, this is not exactly how his career turns out. Nonetheless, the passage contains important hints about certain historical aspects of his reading. Because the theater involves both intensive and extensive modes of reading and connects them, it stands in a more general sense for transition. Thus, Mariane, who represents the traveling theater, repeats the same play over and over again for constantly changing audiences. From her actor's standpoint, then, we find the conditions of intensive reading duplicated. From the standpoint of the ever-changing audience, however, we find the conditions of extensive reading, where expectation is driven by the desire to see something new. And this became the basic drive to establish a standing, or National Theater, such as Wilhelm hopes to found. Thus outfitted with a repertoire of *new* plays for the *same* audience, actors would simultaneously become intensive and extensive readers. In this sense, the theater motif of the *Lehrjahre* follows

¹² Kurth shows that Wilhelm's prior literary experience influenced his relationship with Mariane and led to its idealization: "In Erinnerung an mittelbare literarische Erfahrung glaubte Wilhelm in Mariane eine ideale Geliebte zu besitzen, so wie sie ihm aus Dramen und Dichtung bekannt ist" (212).

the history of reading¹³ by allowing its protagonist to operate in a region between intensive and extensive reading. While Wilhelm will vacillate for some time between his obligation to the family business and his passion for the theater later in the novel, he will continually find himself engaged with theatrical productions, including his formative involvement with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. And by exploring the dynamic area between intensive and extensive reading, he will find new reading opportunities even after his mission ends.

Two entire books of Goethe's novel are devoted to reading and staging *Hamlet*, which plays a crucial role in Wilhelm's *Bildung*. In addition to analyzing the theater motif and reading, the *Hamlet* episode also makes literary reception thematic.¹⁴ Wilhelm's decision to produce *Hamlet* is important, as Shakespeare figured fundamentally in the emergence of the German theater (*bürgerliches Trauerspiel*) (Selbmann, *Theater im Roman* 18). Haverkamp refers to the play as "ein Stück inszenierte Rezeption" (137-8), and Paulin defines Goethe's novel as a new chapter in Shakespeare's reception in Germany (181). Accordingly, the discussion of the play within the novel not only addresses general issues about the effect of a literary work; it also ties Wilhelm's *Bildung* directly to his consumption of Shakespeare's play. More specifically, the novel investigates the process of self-formation by featuring it in terms of an emerging reader and his reading process. In other words, Wilhelm exemplifies what can happen to an intensive reader during the course of literary reception, including, of course, the acquisition of new reading

¹³ How closely the development of the theater and reading are connected to each other is shown by Selbmann, whose sociopolitical observations make clear that the nearly simultaneous achievements in the development of the eighteenth-century drama and novel were dependent on the growth of a reading public and audience: "Sowohl Romanaufstieg wie Dramenentwicklung sind nur möglich und zu verstehen auf dem Hintergrund der Entstehung einer repräsentativen Gruppe des lesenden wie zuschauenden Publikums, eines Mittelstandes der Gebildeten" (*Theater im Roman* 29). Furthermore, Boyle points out the close relationship between the development of the novel and drama: "Literatursoziologisch ist das Drama als Lesestoff als Ergebnis derselben Strömungen zu begreifen, die unter anderen Bedingungen die Entwicklung des Romans begünstigt haben" (61).

¹⁴ Goethe's novel contributed without any doubt to the widespread circulation and reception of Shakespeare's works in Germany (Paulin 179).

behaviors. Although more and more features of extensive reading will be introduced over the course of the novel, Wilhelm's Shakespeare reading continues to have importance for him as he continues to read. That is to say, his subsequent extensive reading will always remain grounded in intensive reading. This is not an inconsistency, however, since extensive reading, as has already been suggested, often offers an experience similar to intensive reading, but in different contexts.¹⁵ Furthermore, acting, if it is to succeed, must maintain an intensive mode of reading.

Theatrical productions are based on plays or other texts that are distributed in written form and must be read. Every performance thus originates in reading. A group of actors first reads a play, then memorizes and rehearses and, finally, stages it. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Wilhelm's participation in theatrical productions often begins with readings. The most significant, of course, is his encounter with Shakespeare's work, which leads him to read extensively. Following Jarno's recommendation, Wilhelm acquires a number of plays by Shakespeare, which he does not read over and over, but rather consumes one after another: "Wilhelm hatte kaum einige Stücke Shakespeares gelesen, als ihre Wirkung auf ihn so stark wurde, daß er weiter fortzufahren nicht im Stande war" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 551). Interestingly, the effect of the plays is even stronger than he had felt as a child and he must interrupt his reading. Thus Jarno is satisfied with Wilhelm's devotion to *Hamlet*, would like to know more about him, although he also castigates him for spending his time with Melina's group.¹⁶ However, Wilhelm

¹⁵ "Der wahrscheinlich überwiegende Teil der Leser suchte auch durch extensive Lektüre ein und denselben Leseindruck durch neue Produkte zu wiederholen. Er war trotz des Wechsels der Titel auf andere Art und Weise ebenfalls dadurch ein Wiederholungsleser, daß er trotz ausgedehnter einmaliger Lektüre an einer bestimmten Thematik und Form festhielt und in einem neuen Buch das alte mit ähnlichen neuen Mitteln reproduziert sehen wollte." (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122).

¹⁶ Jarno actually offers to take Wilhelm to a different location to work with other people: "mögen Sie Ihre Kräfte und Talente unserm Dienste widmen, Mühe, und wenn es Not tut, Gefahr nicht scheuen, so habe ich eben jetzt eine Gelegenheit, Sie an einen Platz zu stellen, den eine Zeitlang bekleidet zu haben, Sie in der Folge nicht gereuen wird" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 553). Jarno's critique and his subsequent offer anticipate the Society of the Tower's critique of

is not yet ready to turn his back on the stage and chooses to continue his “old” reading behavior by staging *Hamlet*, which now reintroduces intensive reading into his extensive acquisition of Shakespeare.

When the group starts working on the play, Wilhelm analyzes different roles, comparing the reading behavior of the audience to that of the actors. Both read the same play, he muses, but the actors and audience have different expectations of and responsibilities toward the text: “Dies ist dem Zuschauer wohl erlaubt, der gerührt und unterhalten sein, aber eigentlich nicht urteilen will. Der Schauspieler dagegen soll von dem Stücke und von den Ursachen seines Lobes und Tadels Rechenschaft geben können” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 578). The difference that Wilhelm evokes here lies in repetitive readings and their frequency. An actor has the responsibility not only to memorize a text, but also to interpret it through his play. This is only made possible by rereading it. However, an actor should never limit his interpretation, or judgment of a play to the characters played, says Wilhelm, which in turn makes the actor a “Wiederholungsleser” (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122) (“intensive, repetitive reader”), who rereads the same text to reproduce an experience resembling intensive reading. By contrast, the audience represents the new type of “extensive” reader, who watches the play once and then moves on to the next.

While working to produce a play inevitably means reading a text intensively, Wilhelm’s engagement with *Hamlet* also reveals different levels of this kind of reading. His first step is to read the play thoroughly and multiple times. As a result, he wants to perform *Hamlet* “ganz und unzerstückt” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 661).¹⁷ Although Serlo agrees with this plan, he also thinks that the

Wilhelm’s involvement with the theater and foreshadow his later association with it. This conversation calls to mind the end of the novel, when Wilhelm gains admittance to the Society and continues the conversation with Jarno.

¹⁷ Wilhelm’s initial plan to perform *Hamlet* uncut corresponds with theater practices of his day that Goethe discredited in his essay “Shakespear und kein Ende” (1815) (“Shakespeare Once again”): “Nun hat sich aber seit vielen Jahren das Vorurteil in Deutschland eingeschlichen, daß man Shakespear auf der deutschen Bühne Wort für

request is a “wunderliche[s] Begehren” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 661). These different responses reflect the divisive nature of their approach to the play. Serlo, as an experienced director, would cut the play in order to perform it, a common theater practice. And while the director submits to Wilhelm’s wish, the authority of Goethe’s protagonist is undermined by an ironic comment from the narrator.¹⁸ Despite his naïve disposition and unwillingness to listen to the more experienced director, however, Wilhelm convinces Serlo to adopt his interpretative position (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 661-665): “[D]ie Idee hat völlig meinen Beifall” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 665). But Wilhelm’s approach, which would consider the dramatic text in its entirety, corresponds to the approach of a reader, as opposed to a theater director, who would cut it. That is to say, with his attention to detail and his call for repeated readings, Wilhelm, as an intensive reader, distrusts the dramatic medium. His focus on the text makes it into an inviolable linguistic entity.¹⁹

In this context, his initial reading and interpretation of the play also results in the urge to compare the original with the translation by Wieland²⁰ (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 666), which again evokes intensive reading. Wilhelm must re-read his text and pay close attention to its specific parts: “Er fing nun an nach seinem Plane auszuheben und einzuschieben, zu trennen und zu verbinden, zu verändern und oft wieder herzustellen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 666). But the translation of a text always

Wort aufführen müsse und wenn Schauspieler und Zuschauer daran erwürgen sollten” (*FA*, Vol. 1/19, 649). Although Wilhelm finally cuts and revises Shakespeare’s play, his original approach is naïve and part of an inner need for identification with Hamlet, as Paulin interprets it (187). For more on Wilhelm’s revisions, see Delong’s article on “Reflections on a Remarkable Performance of *Hamlet*: A Re-examination of the *Hamlet* Scene in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*” (77-78).

¹⁸ “Wilhelm befand sich noch in den glücklichen Zeiten, da man nicht begreifen kann, daß an einem geliebten Mädchen, an einem verehrten Schriftsteller irgend etwas mangelhaft sein könne” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 661).

¹⁹ Wilhelm’s behavior overlaps with Goethe’s suggestion to read Shakespeare and not to consume his plays as performed in his “Shakespear und kein Ende”: “so wird Shakespear in wenigen Jahren ganz von der deutschen Bühne verdrängt sein, welches denn auch kein Unglück wäre, denn der einsame oder gesellige Leser wird an ihm desto reinere Freude empfinden” (*FA*, Vol. 1/19, 650).

²⁰ Mueller’s article, “Wieland’s *Hamlet* translation and Wilhelm Meister,” provides background to the source of Wilhelm’s *Hamlet*-reading. Mueller emphasizes that Wieland omitted some parts of the original play in his translation, which explains Wilhelm’s interpretation on the Hamlet figure. The article compares Shakespeare’s play with Wieland’s translation, revealing the differences that influence Wilhelm’s understanding.

also constitutes a new text, since the original and its translation are never actually the same. Thus, Wilhelm not only conducts a close reading of Shakespeare's play (with the German translation available to him), he also compares the translation with the original, thereby situating himself as a reader between two discrete texts. Although Wieland's translation introduced him to Shakespeare's play, moreover, he was never satisfied with it, particularly because Wieland left out certain parts. Consequently, he rewrites Wieland's Shakespeare²¹ and produces a third text that has its origin in intensive reading.²²

This transitional reading experience and Wilhelm's preparation for the role of the Danish prince leads him to identify with Hamlet, which is an important part of his further construction as reader.²³ At first Wilhelm takes over Hamlet's role unconsciously.²⁴ Gradually, however, he allows it to absorb him entirely: "So memorierte ich, und so übte ich mich, und glaubte nach und nach mit meinem Helden zu einer Person zu werden" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 578-9). As we saw in the

²¹ Similarities between Wilhelm and Werther are evident. Both engage in translating literary texts (Ossian and Shakespeare) and both have a tendency to identify themselves with fictional figures (See Paulin 186).

²² Interestingly, reading the translation leads Wilhelm to rewrite Shakespeare's play to his own purposes, which in fact contradicts his initial plan to stage the play uncut.

²³ This topic has been a subject of debate in the *Meister* discussion. One can find two opposing positions, arguing both for and against an identification with Hamlet on Wilhelm's side. Thus, Dye refines the position of Bonds, who challenges the commonly held view that Wilhelm simply identifies with Hamlet (101) and uses this as a point of departure. While acknowledging that this takes place, he also emphasizes that "identification too implies difference," although Wilhelm fails to recognize any. According to Dye, Wilhelm does not consume, but rather exploits Shakespeare's play (67-71). He then supports the idea of Wilhelm's using the figure of Hamlet for his own purposes by referring to other characters, like Jarno and the Abbé. Dye concludes that "[t]he quest for identity motivates his identification with *Hamlet*" (74). It leads to the fusion of Wilhelm's identity with the other, so that the other vanishes (78). Similarly, Bonds claims that the Hamlet figure disappears with Wilhelm's performance, because Wilhelm transfers his own personality onto Hamlet. However, Bonds emphasizes, this view originated with Jarno, who also manipulates the real readers, as he offers an interpretation of Wilhelm: "wer sich nur selbst spielen kann, [ist] kein Schauspieler" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 931). Bonds concludes that the close connection of Wilhelm and Hamlet in the context of Jarno's statement can lead to a misinterpretation of the *Hamlet* episode: Wilhelm is only looking for a point of reference for identification in Hamlet and, furthermore, in the whole novel (101). Along similar lines, Michelsen's interpretation of Wilhelm's relationship to the play and the figure of Hamlet actually reveals Wilhelm's reading strategy: "Wilhelm desires to reach an understanding of the drama, a 'Vorstellung des Ganzen' [...] by attempting to reconstruct Hamlet's character" (28).

²⁴ "Wir setzten uns vor, das Stück zu spielen, und ich hatte, ohne zu wissen was ich tat, die Rolle des Prinzen übernommen" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 578).

case of David and Goliath, intensive reading drives Wilhelm to identify fully with the main character(s). Nevertheless, it also causes him difficulties:

Allein je weiter ich kam, desto schwerer ward mir die Vorstellung des Ganzen, und mir schien zuletzt fast unmöglich, zu einer Übersicht zu gelangen. Nun ging ich das Stück in einer ununterbrochenen Folge durch, und auch da wollte mir leider manches nicht passen. Bald schienen sich die Charaktere, bald der Ausdruck zu widersprechen, und ich verzweifelte fast, einen Ton zu finden, in welchem ich meine ganze Rolle mit allen Abweichungen und Schattierungen vortragen könnte. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 579)

In the process of his intensive reading, Wilhelm gets lost in the details of the characters, and this prevents his understanding the play overall.²⁵ In order to come to a synthesis after analyzing the details, then, Wilhelm must explore a new strategy. He must read the play thoroughly, so that his identification with the lead role does not interfere with his overall comprehension. He must realize that the text is more complex than he had expected and that the configuration of *Hamlet* does not allow for his complete identification with its hero.²⁶ Instead of meeting such challenges of the text and accepting a new readerly role, however, Wilhelm fails to adjust his reading and undertakes the task of translating and, thus, rewriting the play. This strategy has an effect on his acting as well. The translation serves to hide his shortcomings as an actor. Even “[t]he narrator,” concludes Michelsen, “spares himself no pains [...] to convince the reader that Wilhelm is

²⁵ Wilhelm’s reading process here and his urge to gain an understanding of the whole play corresponds to the method of scientific observation and experiment that Goethe describes in “Der Versuch als Vermittler von Subjekt und Objekt” (1793): “Sobald wir einen Gegenstand in Beziehung auf sich selbst und in Verhältnis mit anderen betrachten, und denselben nicht unmittelbar entweder begehren oder verabscheuen; so werden wir mit einer ruhigen Aufmerksamkeit uns bald von ihm, seinen Teilen, seinen Verhältnissen einen ziemlich deutlichen Begriff machen können” (FA, Vol. 1/25, 27).

²⁶ I agree with Michelsen’s conclusion about the function of the *Hamlet* episode in the novel: “Thus Wilhelm’s admittance to Shakespeare’s world is not a break with what has gone before. Indeed, in Shakespeare’s plays, which he has read in Wieland’s translation of 1762-66 [...], Wilhelm finds that everything illustrated and depicted there already exists within himself” (25). Furthermore, DeLong correctly observes that “Wilhelm invents many biographical details and personality traits [in his reading *Hamlet*]. He comes to the conclusion, however, that the young Hamlet must have had a well rounded personality, that he was fairly well educated, socially at ease, neither too idle nor too active, moderate in his love of woman, possessed of a keen sense of what is right, willing to tolerate minor insults but opposed to any serious impropriety, scornful of scheming courtiers, but not given to deep-seated hatred” (74).

nothing more than a dilettante when it comes to acting” (23). Jarno offers the same opinion: “ist es doch so rein entschieden: daß, wer sich nur selbst spielen kann, kein Schauspieler ist” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 931). Although there are similarities between reading and acting, Wilhelm fails as an actor, but he remains a reader through his acting. But even in his reading, he needs to learn more.

Despite the clear differences between reading novels and performing plays, these genres share characteristics that can affect their reception, as Bergk emphasizes in *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* (1799): “Der Leser eines Buches muß das thun, was der Schauspieler, der Künstler ist, thut. Er muß dem Schriftsteller nachhelfen: er muß das Selbtsdenken nicht aufgeben, sondern er muß ihm vor- und nachdenken” (66).²⁷ Both reader and actor realize texts through their reading or acting, and such realization requires interpretation. Bergk therefore invokes an active and creative involvement on the reader’s part that is comparable to the activity of artist or actor. But Wilhelm has not yet demonstrated that he is able to read creatively by refraining from imposing himself on the text, and so he becomes bored with it.

At the end of the *Hamlet* episode, the narrator describes an analogous decline of interest in the play for the audience as well:

So schlich der Tag nun weiter, und Wilhelmen war noch keiner jemals so alltäglich vorgekommen. Statt der gewöhnlichen Unterhaltung Abends fing man zu gähnen an; das Interesse an Hamlet war erschöpft und man fand eher unbequem daß er des folgenden Tages zum zweitenmal vorgestellt werden sollte. (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 698)

Although Wilhelm has also lost interest in playing Hamlet, of course, he goes on with the production.²⁸ Nonetheless, his indifference affects the performance and the play’s reception, as

²⁷ Goethe’s novel addresses the question of genres by including a discussion about the drama and novel. However, this discussion takes a different direction, and I will address it later. See pp. 82ff. below.

²⁸ Wilhelm does not take part in the rehearsals with the same enthusiasm anymore: “Wilhelm nahm sich zusammen so gut er konnte, um nicht gleich anfangs gegen seine so lebhaft gepredigten Grundsätzen zu verstoßen. Seine große Übung half ihm durch” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 697).

the audience does not identify him with Hamlet anymore and even (ironically) mistakes him for the actor who is playing Laertes (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 706). Although Wilhelm continues with the production, and even becomes the director (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 715), however, he leaves the company and the theater shortly thereafter, “setting the stage,” as it were, for his further exploration of extensive reading. The loss of interest in a single text can promote reading new ones. For Wilhelm, this means changing genres, as he moves from dramatic to biographical narratives and must, therefore, acquire new strategies as well.

2.1.2 Biographies

Reading his own life story from the scroll entitled “Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre” marks the final reading assignment of Wilhelm’s *Bildung*. As we have seen, Goethe’s protagonist goes through a number of readings that prepare him for this task—some of which even prefigure it, as the readings embedded in the context of the theater allow him to practice both intensive and extensive reading. As he approaches the end of his acting career, however, he engages a new type of text—the biography—that will complete the transition from intensive to extensive reading.

While physically and emotionally involved with the *Hamlet* production, to the exclusion of all else, Wilhelm reads about Serlo’s career (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 632-638) and enjoys the experience, which the novel indirectly presents through the narrator’s summary. Consequently, the real readers of the *Lehrjahre* do not have the same reading experience as Wilhelm. Instead, the narrator relates Serlo’s biography and its effect on Wilhelm: “Nicht ohne das größte Interesse vernahm er Stückweise den Lebenslauf Serlo’s” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 632). And likewise, when commenting on the reading situation after abruptly ending his account of Serlo’s life, he hesitates

to offer a conclusion: “Von seinen [Serlos] Schicksalen und Abenteuern sprechen wir vielleicht an einem andern Orte” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 638).²⁹ Serlo’s life story (including his childhood, his becoming an actor and studying roles, his wanderings in Germany as an actor, and the effect of his play on the audience) is an important embedded narrative that introduces Wilhelm to biography, and it will be followed by more of its kind. Its significance lies not only in the introduction of a new genre, but also in Wilhelm’s reaction to it as a reader. Although he enjoys reading the story, he does not have the inclination to dramatize it at first. In fact, he does not read it again and instead moves on to other texts, such as *Hamlet* and other biographies. That is to say, Wilhelm moves on to extensive reading. And although he remains in the world of the theater while staging *Hamlet*, he becomes more familiar with the autobiographical genre, when he enters the next major reading situation, his encounter with the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*. Reading such autobiographies eventually prompts Wilhelm to reflect on his own reading practices and himself rather than to search for himself in a text and externalize his reading through performance. And significantly, this will prepare him to read and compose his own autobiography.

Goethe devotes an entire book (six) to the *Bekenntnisse*, which he presents in full as an autonomous text within his novel.³⁰ Consequently, and for the first time, Wilhelm’s own reading overlaps with the reading of real readers. The roots of autobiography in self-reflexive memory (Fleischer 809) connect to Wilhelm’s reading and the composing of his own autobiography. As Natalie describes the *Schöne Seele*, people like her “sind [...] außer uns, was die Ideale im

²⁹ Even Wilhelm’s reaction is mediated by the narrator, as we learn that he enjoys reading: “Wilhelm [brachte] auf diese Weise sehr angenehme Stunden [zu]” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 638).

³⁰ This raises the issue of the relationship between the part and the whole that is so crucial in Goethe’s writing. The *Bekenntnisse* is the first embedded narrative quoted in its entirety in the novel, providing the female counterpart of Wilhelm’s *Bildungsroman*: “the *Bekenntnisse* provide the central dramatic commentary for the larger *Bildungsgeschichte* of the *Lehrjahre*” (Fleischer 820). See also Ammerlahn’s *Imagination und Wahrheit* (214 ff).

Innern sind, Vorbilder, nicht zum Nachahmen, sondern zum Nachstreben” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 898). Ironically, however, Goethe’s novel excludes all reference to Wilhelm’s reading strategy for this interlocuted novella. We only know that he reads it aloud for Aurelie in bits and pieces: “Von dieser Zeit an war sie sehr still und schien sich nur mit wenigen Ideen zu beschäftigen, die sie sich aus dem Manuskript eigen zu machen suchte, woraus ihr Wilhelm von Zeit zu Zeit vorlesen mußte” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 725). In other words, the presentation of the manuscript as a complete text within the *Lehrjahre* stands in contrast to Wilhelm’s reading, which is frequently interrupted. And yet the *Bekenntnisse* assist in synthesizing his reading experiences in the last two books.

The manuscript’s autobiographical form does not establish another layer of fictionality, however, but rather refers to the fictional world of the *Lehrjahre*.³¹ Natalie confirms this when she learns that Wilhelm has read the manuscript: “Sie könnten in einem gewissen Sinne nicht besser von uns unterrichtet sein, als durch den Aufsatz unserer Tante” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 898).³² Subsequently, Wilhelm continues to discover connections between the manuscript and the people around him: “Wilhelm hatte indessen schnell überdacht, daß er nun auch von Lothario’s Herkunft und früher Jugend unterrichtet sei; die schöne Gräfin erschien ihm als Kind mit den Perlen ihrer Tante um den Hals; [...] Er lief die Bekanntschaften durch, die ihm jene Schrift verschafft hatte. So bin ich denn, rief er aus, in dem Hause des würdigen Oheims!” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 898-9). This referentiality becomes especially clear in the Book Eight. Although the *Bekenntnisse* come up in the conversation of the last two books multiple times, the story does not become an intensive reading experience for Wilhelm. He reads the manuscript only once, and it

³¹ Characters, like Lothario, Natalie, Friedrich, the Abbé, and the Oheim, who are involved with the *Turmgesellschaft* and appear in the last two books, are mentioned.

³² Natalie’s reference to the *Bekenntnisse* as *Aufsatz* emphasizes the written form of the manuscript according to the definition of Grimm’s dictionary: “*was niedergeschrieben, zu papier gebracht, abgefasst wird*” (Vol. I 718). The essay genre itself draws attention to the author’s personal point of view, which is reinforced by its autobiographical character.

has an impact on him, but he does not have the urge to read it again or to memorize it, let alone perform it.

The narratological characteristics of the *Bekenntnisse* are important in terms of its reading, as Zantop suggests in her article about the position of women in the text. Although Zantop does not explore the impact of the Book Six on its reader, she claims that by integrating a first person narration into the *Lehrjahre*, Goethe, like Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, makes literary production and reception a theme within his novel (75). Autobiographical narration sets different expectations for readers than does the *Bildungsroman*, however (77). In the first person narrative of the *Bekenntnisse*, according to Zantop, the narrator's self-awareness and self-knowledge are apparent from the beginning. By contrast, Wilhelm gains these qualities only gradually through his reading. In addition, the distinctive character of the *Bekenntnisse* originates from its placement. It is formulated according to the conventions of autobiography. However, the first person story of the female protagonist is embedded in the biography of a male figure, Wilhelm Meister. His story not only provides a context for the *Bekenntnisse*, but also completes the autobiography, which is fragmented by nature (Zantop 87). In this light, as the Beautiful Soul takes a reflexive a position authoring her autobiography, the manuscript provides a model for Wilhelm to narrate his own life story and think about his education and development as a reader. The *Bekenntnisse* make the importance of reading for its narrator's *Bildung* clear. Furthermore, it makes an important connection between reading and writing, which I will elaborate upon in the second half of this chapter.

After reading the biographies of Serlo and the Beautiful Soul, Wilhelm meets Therese at Lothario's estate, where she engages him in mutual storytelling about their lives. Specifically her own "Geschichte eines deutschen Mädchens" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 823) is narratologically presented in

a variety of ways. As Therese starts telling her story, she is directly quoted, so that the real readers and Wilhelm can follow it simultaneously. However, this reading is interrupted by conversations, and Wilhelm's reception is not emphasized. In fact, his behavior shows him to be submerged in his own thoughts: "Das Gespräch auf dem Wege war nicht sehr lebhaft" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 835). After these interruptions, the novel does not resume with Therese's first-person narrative, which the narrator instead summarizes for the real readers without commenting upon Wilhelm's reaction. At the end of the novel, moreover, the Abbé supplements Therese's family history, contradicting and correcting her account, not only for Wilhelm, but for everyone in the Society.³³ Therese's story thus connects to the *Bekenntnisse* by revealing more of their family history and supplementing the family chronicle. The Abbé's subsequent revisions show that such stories are not final, but subject to changes. Just as the female narratives are parts within a larger story, Wilhelm's *Lehrjahre* become part of a collection of scrolls describing the intellectual development of the male members of the society.

The scroll that records Wilhelm's biography constitutes his next reading and concludes his initial education. Its structure is complex, because it expands and summarizes the totality of his prior reading experiences by connecting the primarily intensive reading of his past and the theater to his current life, where extensive reading predominates. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the *Turmgesellschaft* is critical of Wilhelm's involvement with theater companies and productions, which it believes should not be the goal of *Bildung*. Ironically, however, Wilhelm's introduction to the Society's library of biographical scrolls is staged in an

³³ "Wir haben, sagte er, im Allgemeinen behauptet, daß Fräulein Therese nicht die Tochter ihrer Mutter sei; es ist nötig, daß wir uns hierüber auch nun im Einzelnen erklären. Hier ist die Geschichte, die ich sodann auf alle Weise zu belegen und zu beweisen mich erbiete" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 940).

overtly theatrical scene (Meuthen, *Eins und doppelt* 75, 87).³⁴ First he enters a room in Lothario's castle that is unfamiliar to him. It is equipped with a stage and divided by a curtain (FA, Vol. 1/9, 872-73). This mise-en-scène connects Wilhelm's previous reading experiences with the new one that follows. Here he sees "an statt der Bücher viele Rollen aufgestellt" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 872), one of which, as things turns out, features the story of his own apprenticeship. Wilhelm receives the scroll and starts reading it, but the Abbé interrupts him: "Genug! rief der Abbé, das übrige zu seiner Zeit" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 875). The interruption is important, because Wilhelm is not yet ready to read his own "Lehrjahre" in its entirety. He must be prepared, and the *Turmgesellschaft* takes care of that preparation. Jarno and other members of the Society will discuss the content of the scroll with Wilhelm.

Never before, in fact, has Wilhelm received or done so much in preparation for a reading. As references to himself and his own reality surface, he hesitates and needs time before resuming the process:

Wilhelm war indessen vorbereitet genug, die Umstände hatten schon lebhaft zu ihm gesprochen, seine Freunde hatten ihn eben nicht geschont, und wenn er gleich das Pergament mit einiger Hast aufrollte, so ward er doch immer ruhiger, je weiter er las. Er fand die umständliche Geschichte seines Lebens in großen scharfen Zügen geschildert, weder einzelne Begebenheiten, noch beschränkte Empfindungen verwirrten seinen Blick, allgemeine liebevolle Betrachtungen gaben ihm Fingerzeige, ohne ihn zu beschämen, und er sah zum erstenmal sein Bild außer sich, zwar nicht, wie im Spiegel, ein zweites Selbst, sondern wie im Porträt, ein anderes Selbst. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 884)

For the first time, the narrator describes Wilhelm as a reader in great detail. This description includes both his preparation for the reading and its effect on him. Here we find a fictitious

³⁴ In fact, Minden assigns a shaping function to the two organizing principles, the theater and the Tower, in Wilhelm's social development: "The twin 'institutions' of the theatre and the tower are the most evident devices by which Wilhelm's development is represented. They are the social forms in relation to which his mature self takes shape. But they are of necessity provisional, and they are both ironised within the novel. [...] The aesthetic novel contains irony, but is not itself ironised" (28). This shaping function is important in terms of reading as well.

reader opening a text with expectations, which he in turn revises during the course of reading. Confronting a narrative about himself, Wilhelm must develop new strategies. Thus, rather than engage with his former practice of staging a text, he refuses to be caught up in the details of the narrative sequence and focuses on a comprehensive picture.³⁵ Because he is looking at himself, of course, he faces the text with anxiety. But he nonetheless feels gradually relieved during the reading. In his earlier readings of David and Goliath, *Jerusalem Delivered*, or *Hamlet*, Wilhelm had desperately looked for figures with whom he could identify, i.e. for mirror images. This time, however, he encounters a description of the self without aggressively imposing himself on the text. He expects a mirror image in the text,³⁶ which he does not find to his surprise. Unable fully to identify with the story, as he had done with *Hamlet*, he must therefore consider differences between himself and his “second self,” which the embedded narrative produces. By differentiating between mirror image and portrait, Wilhelm’s reading now allows him to see himself through the eyes of a stranger, from an outside point-of-view for the first time.

Another important feature of Wilhelm’s “Lehrjahre” is that the Society has documented it in a scroll and not in a book.³⁷ Although the scroll, like a book, allows for multiple uses, reading one becomes part of a series of extensive readings for Wilhelm. Yet the biography in the scroll will continue to unfold, and Wilhelm will repeatedly return to its comprehensive picture in various social settings. That is to say, the extensive reading of his own life will retain an important intensive component. Furthermore, his behavior, which corresponds to the reading mania of the age, with its “empathic” interest, to use Wittmann’s term, expresses an great desire

³⁵ Wilhelm gains an *Übersicht* in this last stage of his “Lehrjahre,” a process Goethe describes in his essay “Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt:” “Aber diese Materialien müssen in Reihen geordnet und niedergelegt sein, nicht auf eine hypothetische Weise zusammengestellt, nicht zu einer systematischen Form verwendet. Es steht alsdenn einem jeden frei, sie nach seiner Art zu verbinden und ein Ganzes daraus zu bilden”(FA, Vol. 1/25, 35-6).

³⁶ “Wie ungern tritt man nach einer Krankheit vor den Spiegel!” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 884).

³⁷ The scroll’s strong connection to the *Torah* emphasizes its communal dimension.

to read about the lives on the printed page (“überwiegende Bedürfnis nach Kontakt mit dem Leben hinter der gedruckten Seite”) (“Gibt es eine Leserrevolution” 435). This desire then propels Wilhelm from one situation to another reading, bits and pieces of the *Lehrbrief*, until he finally establishes his own life in print, as he appears to enter a creative relationship with the text by rewriting it. This writing differs from Wilhelm’s aspirations to rewrite *Hamlet*, however, because his engagement with Shakespeare’s play violated the text. I will discuss the social aspects of this kind of reading and its relationship to writing later. But first I want to discuss the final episode of reading in the novel, which involves not only Wilhelm, but the entire company at Lothario’s estate.

At the end of the Book Eight, we find the story of Augustin (the Harpist) and Sperata, Mignon’s parents, as an embedded narrative that parallels the *Bekenntnisse* and has been juxtaposed to it. The story reveals the Harpist’s and Mignon’s origins and kinship. The Marchese, who is the Harpist’s brother, tells the family story to the Abbé, who writes it down, very much in accordance with the spirit of the Society : “der Abbé brachte ein Manuskript hervor. Ich habe, sagte er, sogleich die sonderbare Geschichte, wie sie mir anvertraut wurde, zu Papiere gebracht. [...] [U]nd der Abbé las” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 961). The novel thus features the original manuscript, while Wilhelm and the members of the Society receive the Marchese’s story only through another layer of mediation, as the Abbé reads it to them. Like the *Bekenntnisse*, this embedded story refers to other characters in the novel. The significance of this reading lies in the formation of a reading community, which will be the topic of the next section. However, it is also clearly part of Wilhelm’s extensive reading experience, as well as the other listeners’.

In the scene just described, Wilhelm goes through a transitional period between intensive and extensive reading. Although his reading is still typically intensive, it is important to note that

even his childhood is part of the transition between intensive and extensive reading. Wilhelm's reading mania, and the shift in his interest from religious to secular topics reflect current trends in reading. His example shows that real readers might experience the history of reading in their own lives. This means that in addition to current trends, all available reading strategies play an important role in his *Bildung*. While the theater serves Wilhelm's education as a reader, it clearly belongs to the initial phase of his learning. Highly valued, on the other hand, is the reading of biographies. Wilhelm's own biography, as recorded in the scroll, becomes significant in this regard, as it offers him a pivotal reading opportunity. However, reading the scroll does not conclude Wilhelm's *Bildung* as a reader. The final reading situation in the novel, i.e., the story of Augustin and Sperata, highlights the sociable setting of reading, which in turn undermines the very kind of solitary reading that the new form of novel was promoting. Accordingly, an important dimension of reading in the *Lehrjahre* concerns its communal forms and their connection to silent reading. The following section explores this aspect of both intensive and extensive reading, as well as their complex relationship.

2.2 SOCIAL FORMS OF READING

As we have seen, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* thematically treats different aspects of the history of reading. A series of situations in the novel scrutinizes the transition from intensive to extensive reading, focusing on the liminal region between these modalities and on the movement toward extensive reading. Along similar lines, the reading situations offer the opportunity to look more closely at how the novel understands different forms of reading, which range from reading within a community to reading as a solitary activity. An analysis of this aspect of reading must

introduce readers other than Wilhelm into the discussion. While a detailed discussion of them is beyond the scope of the current investigation, their brief treatment will assist in our analysis of Wilhelm as a reader. Furthermore, reading as a sociable activity raises the question of reading aloud or silently: can we assign different roles to the reader, such as *Vorleser*, listener, or solitary and silent reader? We can find Wilhelm exploring these roles in various combinations with both intensive and extensive reading.

Already in his childhood, Wilhelm's reading involved a wide range of forms. Both the *Puppentheater* and real theatrical productions,³⁸ introduces Wilhelm to a variety of unique and diverse reading behaviors and roles, including the reading of a work as a solitary reader, reciting a play before a group of people, memorizing parts, rehearsing on stage, and performing before an audience. Moreover, all of these activities share one driving goal: the staging of a play, which inevitably involves an audience. For Wilhelm, then, the audience and the actors together form a reading community that synthesizes reading experience.³⁹ One of the unique characteristics of this kind of community is its connection to the oral tradition. Thus, the audience constitutes a community for the duration of the spoken word.

2.2.1 The Reading Community and the Private Reader

As Bennett emphasizes, even with the birth of the solitary reader, the “*communal* quality of reading” remained important (*Beyond Theory* 46). Along similar lines, I am suggesting that

³⁸ As Greiner argues, the theater allows for different functions within a production: “Theater besteht in der gleichzeitigen Anwesenheit von Produzierenden und Zuschauern, die beide zugleich Produzent und Produkt, Teil der Wirklichkeit und Abbildung der Wirklichkeit sind” (285).

³⁹ Bennett refers to drama of the time as “the church of literature” (*Theater as Problem* 60), which supports my conclusion. Schön also draws a parallel between the development of a reading and theater at various points in his discussion (83-85, 231).

Goethe's novel makes the simultaneous emergence of the private reader and the reinvention of communal reading thematic. As Wilhelm recalls his childhood, it becomes clear that, as a young reader, he found himself in two opposing situations regarding the social forms of reading. His first encounter with the puppet theater, the performance of the Biblical story of David and Goliath, uniquely defined his reading as a listener. However, readers of the novel quickly learn that Wilhelm also read books. Already in his childhood, therefore, he was both a reader and a listener, which in turn enabled him to unite the two roles that are involved in and crucial to intensive reading: "Mein einziger Wunsch war nunmehr, fuhr Wilhelm fort, eine zweite Aufführung des Stückes zu sehen. [...] Genug, das Theater ward wieder aufgestellt, einige Nachbarskinder gebeten und das Stück wiederholt" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 368-69). Here we can see that Wilhelm's childhood memories offer evidence not only for his intensive reading within a community connected to the oral tradition, but also for his reading strategies as he became involved with the story at many levels (reading it, learning it by heart, watching it performed). He also eventually became obsessed with consuming it.

Wilhelm's growing interest in reading and his reading mania inevitably alienated and separated him from other children. Furthermore, because his reading community was only occasional, as the children gathered only for the performance, he emerged as a solitary reader already during childhood.⁴⁰ Then he was also motivated to find new books to read. In his memories, he appeared as a lonely child who preferred the company of books to that of other children. This alienation is emphasized when Wilhelm finds some books at home, one of which he refers to as a private object of desire: "die Köchin in der benachbarten Küche [machte] einige Bewegungen [...], daß ich alles, so gut ich konnte, zusammendrückte, den Kasten zuschob, nur

⁴⁰ "Von der Zeit an wandte ich alle verstohlenen einsamen Stunden darauf, mein Schauspiel wiederholt zu lesen" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 371).

ein geschriebenes Büchelchen, worin die Komödie von David und Goliath aufgezeichnet war, das oben aufgelegt hatte, zu mir steckte, und mich mit dieser Beute leise die Treppe hinauf in eine Dachkammer rettete” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 371). This incident shows the private and slightly illicit character of reading for Wilhelm: to open a book requires privacy and entails a secret.

These two qualities, then, reading mania and private reading, seem—in Wilhelm’s case—closely connected. Both are associated with the lack of community, and both disrupt the intensive character of Wilhelm’s initial reading, moving him toward extensive reading instead. In short, the earliest reading experiments of Goethe’s protagonist already implicate both community and solitude to constitute a transitional moment between intensive and extensive reading.

Interestingly, this situation corresponds, approximately, to the history of reading, and specifically to the changes in its social form. As soon as Wilhelm can find access to books, his hunger to read cannot be stilled by reading the same text over and over again. Thus, he turns into an extensive reader, who also reads in isolation. Although he cannot continue this practice very long, however, his subsequent reading complicates the issue by maintaining a variety of social forms and readerly roles.⁴¹ But even if Wilhelm’s shift to extensive reading is gradual, and even if we must ultimately associate him with silent and solitary readers, his reading after childhood retains a strong connection to the oral tradition and its distribution of readers and listeners.

Wilhelm’s involvement with *Hamlet* begins with private reading. At Jarno’s suggestion, he reads some plays by Shakespeare:

Ja, rief Wilhelm aus, ich erinnere mich nicht, daß ein Buch, ein Mensch oder irgend eine Begebenheit des Lebens so große Wirkungen auf mich hervorgebracht hätte, als die köstlichen Stücke, die ich durch Ihre Gütigkeit habe kennen lernen.
(*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 552)

⁴¹ See Curran’s description of the changes in the social form of reading at the end of the eighteenth century in “Oral Reading and the German Enlightenment.”

Here Wilhelm is represented as a reader reflecting on his own reading behavior and on the effect that texts can have. In fact, Shakespeare's impact is so strong that he must interrupt his reading from time to time in order to discuss what he has read with Jarno. Although solitary reading is familiar to him from childhood, he now experiences the lack of community as a motivation to search for an interlocutor with whom he can discuss what he has read.⁴² And this prompts Wilhelm, for the first time, to seek out other solitary readers like himself in order to re-unite them in a community. Thus, he is propelled to discuss Shakespeare's plays with Jarno just after he has begun reading them. And the same need emerges during the discussion of *Hamlet* with Melina's company: "Wenn wir das Stück wieder zusammen lesen werden, könnt ihr beurteilen, ob ich auf dem rechten Wege bin" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 580).⁴³ The company, it seems, provides the sociability of reading circles, which were actually emerging at the time.

Not only the theater, but also biographies offer Wilhelm the opportunity to explore the sociable side of reading. As we can see in his first encounter with Serlo's biography, the genre is well suited for private reading: "Indem Wilhelm auf diese Weise sehr angenehme Stunden zubrachte, befanden sich Melina und die übrigen in einer desto verdrießlicher Lage" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 638). On the one hand, this reading alienates Wilhelm from Melina's group and their problems. On the other, however, such solitary reading, as Schön suggests, does not stand in opposition to communal reading, but rather underscores the need for a time and place to read quietly (*Der Verlust* 227). Thus, whereas Wilhelm becomes disconnected from what is happening around him while reading Serlo's life-story, his private reading, like his reading of

⁴² Schön notices this behavior for the readers of the moral weeklies (*moralische Wochenschriften*), which, in fact, encouraged private reading while emphasizing that it should not lead to social alienation: "Auch die Lektüre für sich," he draws the conclusion, "soll nicht von gesellschaftlichem Umgang entfernen, sondern dafür ertüchtigen" (*Der Verlust* 225).

⁴³ Or later, in his discussion with Serlo—"Nun mußte sich, bei Wilhelms Vorliebe für Shakespearen das Gespräch notwendig auf diesen Schriftsteller lenken" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 606).

Shakespeare for the first time, prompts him to look for an interlocutor, who in this case is Serlo himself.

By contrast, Wilhelm's reading of the *Bekenntnisse* and his listening to Therese's story, connect private worlds to the oral tradition from the outset. In both of these situations, first as a reader and then as an auditor, Wilhelm shares his reading with someone else. Because there is only one other reader, the private character of the readings is still pronounced, although it still differs from solitary reading. And while two people do not form a large community, they share the same reading experience, as well as the opportunity for instantaneous exchange. In order to find his identity and social affiliation through reading, Wilhelm learns to initiate conversations that will become the foundation of a reading community. Subsequently, he will also assume a leadership role as a *Vorleser*, or public reader.

2.2.2 Reading to Others

The *Vorleser*, who played a crucial role in communal and oral reading, saw his position change over the course of the eighteenth century. Schön describes different, even contradictory roles that he could fill, depending on the subject of his reading. On the one hand, the public reader continued the tradition of service. On the other, he supervised events where an authoritative voice was heard. Goethe's "Shakespear und kein Ende" (1815) suggests that the author of the *Lehrjahre* still valued oral recitation. The strategy in his essay combines different reading modes. We should read plays aloud, Goethe suggests, but in a solitary mode. This will allow for a special relationship between reader and text in which the word gains a physical form through the voice:

Durchs lebendige Wort wirkt *Shakespear*, und dies läßt sich bei'm Vorlesen am besten überliefern; der Hörer wird nicht zerstreut, weder durch schickliche noch unschickliche Darstellung. Es gibt keinen höhern Genuß und keinen reinern, als sich mit geschloßnen Augen, durch eine natürlich richtige Stimme, ein *Shakespear*'sches Stück nicht deklamieren, sondern rezitieren zu lassen. (*FA*, Vol. 1/19, 638-9)

Interestingly, this passage makes the transition from reading in a theatrical setting to solitary reading. According to Goethe, it is important that the play should not just be performed. But he then differentiates between declaiming and reciting a dramatic text.⁴⁴ In recitation, or reading aloud—which Goethe appears to favor—the reader's passion and excitement must not interfere with the flow of the words. Similarly, by eliminating performance, no visual sensation should disturb the reading. That is to say, Goethe would deny a play its dramatic quality in favor of a dynamic kind of textuality.

Along these lines, Wilhelm's childhood reading experience culminated in a social event that was an important component of his first intensive reading, but that also carried over to extensive reading. If reading happens communally within an aural setting, readers become listeners who do not have to know how to read. Only the person who reads aloud (*vorlesen*) is necessarily literate. Furthermore, the *Vorleser* could add his own interpretation to the text by presenting it to others.⁴⁵ Wilhelm happily takes on this role, both as a child and later as an adult, because it allows him to involve others in his reading experience without relinquishing control.

⁴⁴See also "Regeln für Schauspieler:" "Unter Rezitation wird ein solcher Vortrag verstanden, wie er, ohne leidenschaftliche Tonerhebung, doch auch nicht ganz ohne Tonveränderung, zwischen der kalten ruhigen und der höchst aufgeregten Sprache in der Mitte liegt. Der Zuhörer fühle immer, daß hier von einem dritten Objekte die Rede sei. [...] Ganz anders aber ist es bei der *Deklamation* oder gesteigerten Rezitation. Hier muß ich meinen angeborenen Charakter verlassen, mein Naturell verleugnen und mich ganz in die Lage und Stimmung desjenigen versetzen, dessen Rolle ich deklamieren" (*FA*, Vol. 1/18, 864-5).

⁴⁵Goethe in his jointly authored essay with Schiller, "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung" ("On Epic and Dramatic Poetry") (1797), differentiates between rhapsodists (*Vorleser*) and actors: "so müßte man sich einen Rhapsoden und einen Mimen, beide als Dichter, jenen mit seinem ruhig horchenden, diesen mit seinem ungeduldig schauenden und hörenden Kreise umgeben, immer vergegenwärtigen" (*FA*, Vol. 1/18, 445). Although, there are differences between these two roles, Wilhelm enjoys both.

Along similar lines, the theater permits Wilhelm to experience different modes of reading as well (reading in a community or in solitude, aloud or silent). In the first part of the novel, for instance, when he joins Melina's group, he becomes a *Vorleser* in the traditional sense: "Zu Hause fanden sie auf Wilhelms Zimmer schon alles zum Empfang bereit, die Stühle zu einer Vorlesung zurechte gestellt" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 478). Here the physical setting initiates a reading in which the line between reader and listener has been clearly set. As we have seen, moreover, working in a theater produces reading situations that are connected to the oral tradition. Consequently, Wilhelm begins his reading of a play that is presumably about imperial authority and its decline,⁴⁶ intending to read it authoritatively himself: "Wilhelm bemächtigte sich des Exemplars, und fing zu lesen an" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 478).⁴⁷ He attempts to "possess authority" by reading from the book. But as *Vorleser*, he is not able to secure this authority and, ironically, he fails to control his audience:

Der Vorleser tat sein Möglichstes, und die Gesellschaft kam ganz außer sich. [...] Er warf sich, als er zurück kam, vom Schlafe überwältigt, voller Unmut, unausgekleidet auf's Bette, und nichts glich der unangenehmen Empfindung, zu der er des anderen Morgens erwachte, und, als er die Augen aufschlug, mit düsterem Blick auf die Verwüstungen des vergangenen Tages, den Unrat und die bösen Wirkungen hinsah, die ein geistreiches, lebhaftes und wohlgemeintes Dichterwerk hervorgebracht hatte. (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 478-80)

This episode shows that the intended reception of a text may diverge from its actual reception, which can be randomly defined by external circumstances, in this case an emerging national sentiment, alcohol consumption, and the social constellation of the audience.⁴⁸ Consequently, the

⁴⁶ After the publication of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), a number of plays were written about knights in the second half of the eighteenth century (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 1410).

⁴⁷ "bemächtigen: sich eines landes, reichs, der oberherrschaft, einer stadt, burg, schanze, eines schiffes bemächtigen, sie gewaltsam besetzen, einnehmen; einer person, eines mannes, kindes, flüchtlings, ihn gefangen nehmen" (Grimm, Vol. I, 1457).

⁴⁸ Wieland comments on the erratic and incalculable readerly behaviors in his article "Wie man liebt; Eine Anekdote" (1781). He concludes his writing with a bitter statement about readers and a hopeless wish for an

episode ends with a disaster that leaves Wilhelm with an uncomfortable memory on the next day, “die Verwüstungen des vergangenen Tages” and “die bösen Wirkungen” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 480). These events show the failure of a *Leseabend*. Although Wilhelm recognizes the gap between the intentions of the text and what might actually happen, the only action he takes is to pay for the cleanup. But his ambitions as a *Vorleser* do not diminish.

His next opportunity for recitation involves the Countess, who asks him to visit her and read. Wilhelm prepares carefully for the occasion:

Mit großer Sorgfalt nahm darauf Wilhelm das Stück vor, womit er seinen Eintritt in die große Welt machen sollte. Du hast, sagte er, bisher im Stillen für dich gearbeitet, nur von einzelnen Freunden Beifall erhalten; du hast eine Zeit lang ganz an deinem Talente verzweifelt, und du mußt immer noch in Sorgen sein, ob du dann auch auf dem rechten Wege bist, und ob du so viel Talent als Neigung zum Theater hast? Vor den Ohren solcher geübten Kenner, im Kabinette, wo keine Illusion statt findet, ist der Versuch weit gefährlicher als anderwärts, und ich möchte doch auch nicht gerne zurück bleiben, diesen Genuß an meine vorigen Freuden knüpfen, und die Hoffnung auf die Zukunft erweitern. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 523)

With the opportunity to reflect on his previous reading experiences, Wilhelm evaluates his practices as a private person who had only followed his intuition. Since his talent as an actor is at stake, however, his expectations are juxtaposed against the non-theatrical setting of the situation. Wilhelm can only count on himself and his ability to read aloud. Although the reading takes place in a private room, with the Countess as a listener, it is only semi-public. Accordingly, Wilhelm correctly sees a difference between this and his previous reading. He is now fully in charge of the event and carefully chooses the texts, which he even rehearses:

Er nahm darauf einige Stücke durch, las sie mit der größten Aufmerksamkeit, korrigierte hier und da, rezitierte sie sich laut vor, um auch in Sprache und Ausdruck recht gewandt zu sein, und streckte dasjenige, welches er am meisten

improved readership: “Mit den Autoren ist kein Mitleiden zu haben—und den Lesern ist nicht zu helfen. Aber gleichwohl wäre zu wünschen, daß die Leute besser lesen lernten” (74).

beübt, womit er die größte Ehre einzulegen glaubte, in die Tasche, als er an einem Morgen hinüber vor die Gräfin gefordert wurde. (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 523-24)

In Wilhelm's preparation, we can see the detailed work of a *Vorleser*. Firstly, he reads extensively by reading a number of plays. However, he also reads them multiple times, or intensively. To prepare a text for recitation requires paying attention to its details and practicing it orally and multiple times. Wilhelm must therefore consider not only the impression that the text makes on his listener, but also his presentation, which is in keeping with Körner's suggestion in "Ideen über Deklamation" (1793) that reading aloud involves personality. For Körner, oral presentation (*Vorlesen*), or techniques of reading aloud,⁴⁹ must firstly have an impact on the listener. Nevertheless, clear speech is not his only goal. The *Vorleser* should fill his reading with personality,⁵⁰ which suggests adding his own interpretation to the text. Ironically, we will never know whether Wilhelm would have succeeded at this. His planned reading for the countess's ironically fails to take place due to the constant interruptions of trivial matters.

Later, however, Wilhelm emerges as a successful reader (*Vorleser*), when he transmits the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* to Aurelie. The manuscript is offered by the doctor who treats Aurelie at the end of the Hamlet episode and promises an interesting reading for her and her friend:

[Er] versprach dabei seinen neuen Freunden eine sehr interessante Lektüre an einem Manuskript zu verschaffen, das er aus den Händen einer nunmehr abgeschiedenen vortrefflichen Freundin erhalten habe. Es ist mir unendlich wert,

⁴⁹ "Ist eine Sprache vorhanden, die sich vom Gesang unterscheidet, so kommt es zuerst darauf an, die Bestandtheile der Rede zweckmäßig zum Behuf der D e u t l i c h k e i t zu trennen, und zu verbinden. Dies geschieht durch Pausen. Ihre Länge und Kürze unterscheidet die Abschnitte der Rede, nachdem sie entweder ein für sich bestehendes Ganze ausmachen, oder mit andern Theilen nothwendig zusammenhängen" (Körner 102).

⁵⁰ "Ist Deutlichkeit das einzige Ziel des Vorlesens, so beschränkt er sich auf den niedern, mechanischen Theil seines Geschäfts. [...] Das Kunstmäßige in der Deklamation—die Versinnlichung eines Ideals—wobey Zwecke und Mittel sich ins Unendliche erweitern und vervielfältigen—beginnt mit der Darstellung der Persönlichen" (Körner 103-4).

sagte er, und ich vertraue Ihnen das Original selbst an. Nur der Titel ist von meiner Hand, *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 719)

The manuscript not only initiates a new reading situation for Wilhelm where he can read aloud to Aurelie, it calls for the discussion of other matters as well. The doctor's intention is to use it therapeutically,⁵¹ and Schöblier has discussed *Bibliotherapie*, where reading becomes intellectual medicine for illness (126).⁵² But the *Bekenntnisse* raise issues besides their effect on Aurelie. First, they reproduce a mode of contemporary dissemination by showing how even unpublished manuscripts could circulate among and between individuals. Giving books and manuscripts to others assumes trust. But the doctor's trust in Wilhelm goes even further. He gives him the original, we learn, which raises questions about authorship. The doctor, in fact, is our only source of information on the origin of the *Bekenntnisse*. Goethe's novel thus shows the moment when a manuscript, after its author's death, becomes public or semi-public property. The doctor owns the original, and the choice is his who can read it. He even gives it its title.

The doctor also wants the sharing of the manuscript to continue. He thus lends it first to Wilhelm, who is then supposed to read it to Aurelie: "Kurz darauf kam das vom Arzt versprochene Manuskript an. Sie ersuchte Wilhelmen ihr daraus vorzulesen, und die Wirkung, die es tat wird der Leser am besten beurteilen können, wenn er sich mit dem folgenden Buche bekannt gemacht hat" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 725). The manuscript's circulation, moreover, which promotes extensive reading, reproduces the setting of the oral tradition, as Wilhelm reads the book aloud. Thus, in contrast to the public nature of its sharing, its reading here suggests a

⁵¹ Wilhelm will of course eventually become a *Wundarzt* (doctor).

⁵² Along similar lines, the contemporary Bergk discusses the health benefits of oral reading for the reader: "Lautes Lesen vertritt die Stelle eines Spazierganges. [...] Die Lektüre von inhaltsreichen Büchern erweckt überdies noch einen Wechsel von Gefühlen, Begriffen und Begehrenissen, der uns den Ausdruck leicht macht, weil er unsern Geist angenehm unterhält. Es ist Seelenspeise, die unsere Kräfte stärkt und ihnen Lust zu neuen Anstrengungen einflößt" (*Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen* 69-70).

liminal space between the fully public place of the theater and the private place of the sentimental novel. Traditionally, *Vorlesungen* were public or semi-public gatherings involving groups of listeners. The reading community here, which is limited to Wilhelm and Aurelie, is almost private. Due to her illness, Aurelie depends on Wilhelm to read to her. Their cooperative reading of the *Bekenntnisse* explores the transition between public and private reading.⁵³

The novel also goes on to describe the reactions that other fictitious readers have to the *Bekenntnisse*. And to describe its effect on Aurelie, the narrator even invites the real readers to read the original manuscript in the next book. But this gesture also ironically incorporates the real readers into the fiction, making them into reader figures within the novel, or embedded readers. Further, by including Wilhelm's reaction to the *Bekenntnisse*, albeit much later in the novel, we are shown that texts do not immediately have the same effect on all readers. Thus, in Book Eight, Wilhelm answers Natalie's question about whether he had read the manuscript with passion: "Ja! versetzte Wilhelm, mit der größten Teilnahme und nicht ohne Wirkung auf mein ganzes Leben" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 897). The difference between Aurelie's and Wilhelm's reaction to the manuscript is noteworthy. While Aurelie, who is preparing to die, becomes more introverted during the reading, Wilhelm's fascination with the *Bekenntnisse* translates into enthusiasm and, eventually, into romantic feelings for Natalie, the niece of the *Schöne Seele*.

The *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* provide a caesura not only in Wilhelm's life, but also in the novel.⁵⁴ Just as the protagonist reads it after his engagement with *Hamlet*, but before

⁵³ Book Six is also liminal in the structure of the novel, standing as it does between the *Theatralische Sendung* and the *Lehrjahre*.

⁵⁴ Südhoff correctly evaluates the *Bekenntnisse* as a milestone in the development and realization of the *Individualroman*, although its function within the *Lehrjahre* is actually the opposite, i.e. its own radical liberation from this concept (16). As Kontje sees it, the manuscript points in two directions, connecting past and future, as it reveals information about the members of the Society and introduces characters who will appear in the last two books of the novel (*Private Lives* 72). Yamamoto describes the last three books of the novel, starting with the *Bekenntnisse*, as lacking in plot sequence. This structural change is most obvious in the function of the narrator (32).

arriving at the Society, the first five books of the novel, which are concerned with the theater, are separated from the last two, in which the protagonist becomes a member of the Society through this autobiographical story. Thus, it dissolves the border between past and future. The aunt's book, moreover, which the real readers and Wilhelm read at the same time, introduces both to important themes of the last two books, such as *Bildung*, love, memory, and most importantly reading, which it places in an intermediate zone between privacy and community. Additionally, Wilhelm confronts in the manuscript a first-person narrative that describes the educational, intellectual, and emotional development of its narrator. While the reading situations in the seventh and eighth books must be considered separately from the preceding situations, their origin in the first five books remains undeniable.

2.2.3 A New Community?

Upon reading the scroll in the last two books, Wilhelm unites the strategies and social forms that characterized all of his previous readings, especially those of the embedded biographical texts. He thus reads parts of the scroll on his own and in solitude.⁵⁵ As the documentation of his apprenticeship, however, the scroll is also summarized as an embedded text in part as quotation (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 874-5) and in part as narration (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 884).

Significantly, Wilhelm's reading is also narrated in the scroll. Since it takes time for him to work through the document, moreover, he can receive help interpreting it. There are times, for example, when Jarno reads it aloud with comments and complementary stories: "Jarno blickte hinein, und überließ die erste Hälfte mit den Augen. Diese, sagte er, bezieht sich auf die

⁵⁵ "Wilhelm nahm ihn auf, eröffnete und las" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 874).

Ausbildung des Kunstsinnes, wovon andere sprechen mögen; die zweite handelt vom Leben, und da bin ich besser zu Hause” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 929). Clearly the manuscript is not meant to be read privately. Although Wilhelm consults it in composing his life story in his letter to Therese, Jarno’s comment suggests that the intention of the scroll is to engage Wilhelm in a conversation with the members of the *Turmgesellschaft*. Since each of them has his own specialty, moreover, they can conduct different discussions with Wilhelm. Jarno thus discusses Wilhelm’s life with him: “Er [Jarno] fing darauf an, Stellen zu lesen, sprach dazwischen und knüpfte Anmerkungen und Erzählungen mit ein” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 929). Wilhelm, in turn, accepts his passive role, as a listener, and is open to Jarno’s interpretation. However, once Jarno’s reading and interpretation become too much for him, he protests: “Ich bitte Sie, fiel Wilhelm ein, lesen Sie mir von diesen wunderlichen Worten nicht mehr! Diese Phrasen haben mich schon verwirrt genug gemacht” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 930-31). This strong negative reaction does not stop Jarno, however, who actually clarifies and explains the Society’s involvement in Wilhelm’s life. After this first attempt to stop Jarno, Wilhelm tries two more times (“Lesen Sie nichts!”) (FA, Vol. 1/9, 932) and “Halten Sie inne, rief Wilhelm, ich habe das alles gelesen” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 933). Despite his insistence and hope to get answers to his questions, Wilhelm feels helpless during the recitation and fully at the mercy of the *Vorleser*.⁵⁶

Although Wilhelm’s “Lehrjahre” ended with the reading of the scroll, it is not the last reading situation in the novel. In Book Eight, the Abbé reads the story of Augustin and Sperata

⁵⁶ Wilhelm’s behavior and feelings correspond to the description of the difference between silent and loud reading that Schön quotes from the contemporary journal, *Der Mensch, eine Moralische Wochenschrift* (1751): “Darin sind Zuhören beim Vorlesen und das Selbst-Lesen ‘unterschieden, daß wir nicht hören können wenn wir wollen, und oft hören müssen, wenn wir keine Lust dazu haben: da es uns im Gegentheil frey stehet, so lange zu lesen als wir wollen; wir können anfangen und aufhören, nach unserem Belieben. Das Hören geschieht in Gesellschaft, das Lesen aber wird am besten in der Einsamkeit verrichtet. Bey jenem können wir fragen, wenn wir etwas nicht verstehen, wir können auch Einwürfe machen: allein bey diesem müssen wir unser Nachdenken desto stärker angreifen [...]’” (*Der Verlust* 227).

aloud, recalling the conventions of the oral tradition. Reading is a communal experience here, where the effect of a text becomes obvious for all: “Der Abbé hörte zu lesen auf, und niemand hatte ohne Tränen zugehört. Die Gräfin brachte ihr Tuch nicht von den Augen, zuletzt stand sie auf und verließ mit Natalien das Zimmer. Die übrigen schwiegen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 975). What is most interesting in this situation is the fact that Wilhelm is counted in the company of readers. Not only is the act of reading a communal experience, but reception is collective as well. Accordingly, Goethe’s narrative does not emphasize individual reactions. In fact, the disastrous events that follow this reading situation as Book Eight unfolds show the importance of information distribution through reading. Sharing new information creates an even stronger communal feeling among the members of the Society, as they witness the Harpist’s sudden recovery and then his even more unexpected death.

Goethe’s novel provides a commentary and criticism of current trends moving from communal to solitary reading, which simultaneously means the elimination of loud reading. Although Wilhelm reads from time to time in solitude, he often breaks out, seeking others to engage in discussion. In fact, most of his reading involves other characters in forming a community. Even though advances in book production provided contemporary readers with wider access to books, Wilhelm’s story as a reader suggests that a renewed form of reading communities would be preferable to groups of solitary readers. For such communities, it is crucial to see how Goethe’s novel examines storytelling in the context of reading.

2.3 STORYTELLING AND WRITING AS A FUNCTION OF READING

Even though, as Minden claims, “Wilhelm is formed (‘bilden’) by three institutions: the theater, the tower and the novel itself” (27), the ultimate goal of his *Bildung* is to educate him as reader or, more precisely, as the reader of a narrative text. However, Goethe’s protagonist also shows a marked tendency to become a narrator himself. The novel is therefore framed by situations that unite reading and narrating. In the first book already, Wilhelm tells stories about his childhood to his mother and his mistress, Mariane, for example, and at the end of the novel, we find him again narrating his life-story to another woman, Therese. However, there is a major difference between the two narrative situations: *Bildung* takes place between them. Kontje suggests that something gets lost between these scenes: “In the opening book Wilhelm looked back over his life with the self-satisfaction of a deluded young man; now, after years of experience, he has learned only to despair at the pointlessness of his existence” (*Private Lives* 73).⁵⁷ As I have indicated, however, I disagree with Kontje’s view. In order to evaluate Wilhelm’s intellectual and aesthetic education, we must consider his reading experiences, his development as a reader, and what he finally gains through them. The reading process educates Wilhelm not only as a reader, but also as a writer.

As Schön has argued, a chronological relationship between reading and writing has an historical basis in education: “Eine für uns befremdliche Besonderheit hat dieses mittelalterliche Lernen, die aber bis ins 19. Jahrhundert hinein bestehen bleibt: Man lernt zuerst lesen und erst, wenn man dies beherrscht, wird das Lernen des Schreibens begonnen” (*Der Verlust* 33). Schön’s observation offers an insight into the learning practices of the second half of the eighteenth century and also helps us to understand the order of Wilhelm’s success in reading and writing. I

⁵⁷ Gerhart Hoffmeister shares this view, stating that “Wilhelm’s formative years show a process of disillusionment” (81).

want to argue that Goethe's novel mirrors this pedagogical practice and suggest that in Goethe's *Lehrjahre* writing becomes a function of reading.

The theater, we learn, inspired Wilhelm not only to read and to perform,⁵⁸ but also to write. During his childhood, he recalls, these three activities were unified. "Für mich aber war jene Zeit besonders Epoke, mein Geist richtete sich ganz nach dem Theater, und ich fand kein größer Glück, als Schauspiele zu lesen, zu schreiben, und zu spielen" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 383). Significantly, reading and writing, as well as staging and performing plays, are mentioned as equally important. Furthermore, when taken together, they comprise a lost unity to be retrieved. Nevertheless, the novel emphasizes, and appears to assign priority to reading, by displaying Wilhelm and other characters in various reading situations. Furthermore, only a limited number of these situations explicitly includes a writing activity.⁵⁹ In none of them, however, does Wilhelm succeed in producing a text. Only at the end of his journey, and prepared by his newly won capacity to read well, does Goethe's protagonist return to writing.

During his adolescence, when Wilhelm enjoys his first erotic encounter with Mariane, he is not so much a reader as a listener, or part of an audience in the theater, although he does visit

⁵⁸ Wilhelm's passion for the theater is not limited to performance. He is also driven to learn more about it, as he has already shown with the *Puppenspiel*. Although theater is always connected to storytelling and reading for him, he is eager to learn about the circumstances and mechanisms of production still in the context of theater. "Nachdem ich etwas erfahren hatte, kam es mir erst vor, als ob ich gar nichts wisse, und ich hatte Recht: denn es fehlte mir der Zusammenhang, und darauf kommt doch eigentlich alles an" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 370). Here we can see the mechanism of understanding as a synthesizing moment, which is crucial in Goethe's aesthetics as well as science. Although Wilhelm understands aspects of theatrical production, that is not enough for his complete understanding. He is driven to find a synthetic moment, and this drive motivates him in the reading situations to come. For Wilhelm, the production is just as important as the solitary reading in the overall reading experience.

⁵⁹ At the beginning of the novel, we see Wilhelm in various reading situations that have a connection with the theater. He is involved in these situations in different roles, as reader, actor, and director, and we learn that he had other literary ambitions as well. He wrote poems in his adolescence, but he comes to the conclusion that his ambitions were misdirected, and he is not a real poet: "Nein, der Dichter muß ganz *sich*, ganz in seinem geliebten Gegenständen leben" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 434). He therefore burns his writings. Later, Melina mentions to the Baron that Wilhelm would be a good playwright (FA, Vol. 1/9, 511). But this path is never explicated in detail. In fact, the only opportunity that Wilhelm has to present his plays is ruined by the constant interruption of trivial matters at the countess (FA, Vol. 1/9, 523-4). See pp. 68-69ff. above.

the actress backstage. At the same time, however, he also experiments with a new role that is characteristic of the oral tradition. He becomes a storyteller who entertains his audience. “[D]ie Alte wußte das Gespräch auf Wilhelms Lieblingsmaterie zu wenden. [...] Ja, sagte Mariane: erzähle uns weiter, wie war dir’s zu Mute?” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 367). Wilhelm wants to tell the story of his childhood to Mariane, but his first attempt at becoming a storyteller is no success. Although the narration dominates the first book, Wilhelm is not well-received as a narrator within the fictional world. As much as she tries, Mariane is not a dedicated and honest listener: “Während dieser Erzählung hatte Mariane alle ihre Freundlichkeit gegen Wilhelm aufgeboten, um ihre Schläfrigkeit zu verbergen. So scherzhaft die Begebenheit von einer Seite schien, so war sie ihr doch zu einfach, und die Betrachtungen dabei zu ernsthaft” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 375-76). Later, the narrator even describes her falling asleep while trying to listen to the childhood story: “Mariane, vom Schlaf überwältigt, lehnte sich an ihren Geliebten, der sie fest an sich drückte und in seiner Erzählung fortfuhr” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 381). Nor does Wilhelm realize that she is sleeping. Kontje argues that Wilhelm’s “interest in the theater has been accompanied since childhood by his interest in the opposite sex” (*Private Lives* 60). Mariane, by contrast, does not add any further interest to her purely erotic interest in Wilhelm, and his story remains unreadable for her. It bores her, because it does not prove, to paraphrase Barthes, that it desires her (*The Pleasure* 6). Clearly, the actress is not the right listener for Wilhelm, who must still go through a number of reading situations and be accepted by the Society of the Tower before he can emerge as a narrator.

Like Wilhelm’s development as a reader, his involvement with writing unfolds gradually through the course of the novel. We occasionally find him in situations in which he produces texts, but they are not directly connected with reading situations. He writes letters multiple times,

but his attempts fail for various reasons. Very often, he is expected to report to his family about his business trips. However, he has a hard time confessing that he has turned his back on the family business and become engaged with the theater.⁶⁰ For example, when composing a letter about his encounter with Melina's group, he fails, because he often makes up stories without noticing: "er fing auch wirklich einen Brief an Werner an, und war mit Erzählung seiner Abenteuer, [...] ohne es selbst zu bemerken, sich merhmals von der Wahrheit entfernt hatte" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 463). Obviously, in writing, one must tell the truth. Thus, he destroys the letter in which he is supposed to confess his adventure: "Unwillig zerriß er das Blatt und verschob die Wiederholung seines Bekenntnisses auf den nächsten Posttag" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 464). This is the first time that Wilhelm tries to write about the events in his life. His failure, however, is due to the conflict between his duty to participate in the family business and his affection for theatrical production. Erlin explains this conflict as it originates in reading according to contemporary theories: "In both the reading debates and the controversy over luxury consumption, the overindulgence in sensual pleasures, frequently described as an overstimulation of the nervous system, is seen to lead to a lack of interest in, and an incapacity for, serious work and a corresponding neglect of one's duty in society" (149). Over the course of the novel, Wilhelm finds a place and an occupation to combine his sense of duty with his passion for reading as a member of the Society.

This lack of skill as a narrator is underscored when—again—Wilhelm writes a letter to his family:

⁶⁰ In order to maintain his reading habit Wilhelm must decide between family and theater, because his own family does not support his reading activities that are related to the theater. Although his determination leads him to leave his father's house and pursue a theatrical career, the decision is not an easy one, as it takes Wilhelm time to separate himself emotionally from his family in order to be an actor, i.e. a professional.

Er ergriff nunmehr mit Zuversicht die Feder, um einen Brief zu schreiben, der auf einmal die Familie aus aller Verlegenheit und sein bisheriges Betragen in das beste Licht setzen sollte. Er vermied eine eigentliche Erzählung, und ließ nur in bedeutenden und mystischen Ausdrücken dasjenige, was ihm begegnet sein könnte, erraten. (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 567-68)

The letter does not go into detail, but has been designed to make the family speculate about what actually is happening to Wilhelm. Instead of directly sharing the document with the real readers, however, the narrator reports it. By doing this, he emphasizes the writing process rather than its results. Moreover, the real readers learn that Wilhelm has repeated the content of the letter to himself and added fantasies about his future. Shortly thereafter, he writes to his family again, but he unconsciously invents a story to please them: “Er merkte nicht, daß er beinah in eben dem Falle war, in dem er sich befand, als er ein Schauspiel, das weder geschrieben, noch weniger memoriert war, aufzuführen, Lichter angezündet und Zuschauer herbei gerufen hatte” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 630-31). While Wilhelm instinctively makes up the story, he is not able to do this on his own and goes to Laertes for help. This story about his life-to-be is not one that Wilhelm is able to narrate. As an embedded text, his fabricated journal will never be developed and actually ends with the death of his father (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 651-3). Sometime later, Wilhelm does stand up for himself and articulates his decision in a letter to Werner, who in the meantime has taken over the family business and married Wilhelm’s sister (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 657).⁶¹ But this only occurs after a number of trials, and after Wilhelm develops into a mature storyteller and the narrator of his own life and is finally accepted as a full member of the *Turmgesellschaft*: “er konnte sagen: ich verlasse das Theater, und verbinde mich mit Männern, deren Umgang mich, in jedem Sinne, zu

⁶¹ Werner as accountant contributes to Wilhelm’s development as a writer. Werner represents the family and the business world, especially after the death of Wilhelm’s father. Wilhelm’s letters are addressed to Werner and supposed to tell, i.e. give an account about his life (*erzählen* actually originates from and is related to the verb *zählen* that brings in the accounting dimension of *telling*). Werner as a businessman surely expects clear and true explanations, with which Wilhelm struggles.

einer reinen und sichern Tätigkeit führen muß” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 869). Yet Wilhelm is still only able to write a letter to Werner about his immediate plans. For a more successful letter, which would summarize his reflections on his own life-story, he must first read and then rewrite that story, i.e. finish his education as a reader.

Wilhelm’s conversation with Jarno about reading Shakespeare foreshadows the end of the novel, when—after his arrival at Lothario’s estate and some prodding by Jarno—he becomes the narrator of his own autobiography. “Wilhelm [...] war willig, seinem Freunde und Beschützer die ganze Geschichte seines Lebens zu erzählen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 553). This is the first time in the novel, moreover, that he finds a careful listener. Nevertheless, the episode is not actually narrated, but only reported and commented upon. The reading situation introduces a story that remains hidden from the real readers.

In Goethe’s novel, as Minden puts it, “[t]wo processes of authoring come together: that by which Wilhelm Meister authors his own life and that by which Goethe composes his novel” (24). Wilhelm’s active involvement in composing his own life will be especially important in his acceptance into the Society of the Tower. Shortly after his arrival at Lothario’s estate, he meets Therese, and they soon listen carefully to one another’s life story. Although Wilhelm seems shy and initially belittles his life thus far as one marked by “Irrtümer auf Irrtümer, Verirrungen auf Verirrungen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 823), he nevertheless engages Therese in mutual story-telling and listening, which stands in contrast to the beginning of the novel, when he told Mariane about his childhood, but failed as a storyteller. The episode with Therese thus highlights Wilhelm’s growth as a reader and a narrator. Ironically, however, his relationship with her will not fulfill his hope for marriage, and Therese remains a station in his development as both reader and narrator.

After his first reading of the scroll, Wilhelm feels inspired to enter a productive relationship with its text and produces his own text based on it. When he rewrites the scroll, he begins a new narrative. By working with it in this way, he transforms it from a biography into an autobiography. Even before he reads the scroll about his life, however, Therese awakens the desire in him to tell her his story: “das deutet auf einen komplizierten Roman, und zeigt mir, daß Sie auch etwas zu erzählen haben” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 823). It takes time for Wilhelm to answer Therese’s request. However, reading the scroll will be a great help and motivation for him to compose this autobiographical narrative:

Wilhelm beschäftigte sich nunmehr, indem alle Umstände durch dies Manuskript in sein Gedächtnis zurück kamen, die Geschichte seines Lebens für Theresen aufzusetzen, und er schämte sich fast, daß er gegen ihre große Tugenden nichts aufzustellen hatte, was eine zweckmäßige Tätigkeit beweisen konnte. So umständlicher er in dem Aufsatze war, so kurz faßte er sich in dem Briefe, den er an sie schrieb; er bat sie um ihre Freundschaft, und ihre Liebe, wemns möglich wäre, er bot ihr seine Hand an, er bat sie um baldige Entscheidung. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 885)

This passage offers testimony to Wilhelm’s writing, as well as his reception of the scroll. It is obvious that he has a personal interest in the subject. He therefore not only reads it carefully, as we have seen before, he also remembers its content. He even compares his own story—the content of the *Lehrjahre*—to Therese’s, which he has heard before. Although he does not fare well in this comparison, he is able to compose his story in a letter to her for which he does not ask assistance or consultation from anyone else, as he used to do. Wilhelm, thus, appears inspired to enter a productive relationship with texts and to write one of his own based on the scroll. When he rewrites the scroll, he begins a new narrative. In the last book of the novel, Wilhelm appears as a confident writer, having completed his education as a reader.

Following this episode, and in general throughout the last two books, the frequency of written correspondence increases. Characters write, send, receive, and read letters. Lothario’s

and Lydie's letters are reported, Therese, Natalie, and Wilhelm engage in correspondence, Lothario's letters address the whole society and rearrange their constellation, and finally, the Marchese's letter gives Wilhelm his new assignment as an interpreter to the Marchese. Wilhelm becomes an active participant in this flourish of correspondence, which is an important means of communication and maintains its significance in the *Wanderjahre*. It seems that to become member of the *Turmgesellschaft*, one has to acquire writing.

2.4 READING GENRES

The various readings in Wilhelm's development involve primarily two genres: the novel and the drama. The introduction of dramatic forms sets up a framework for Wilhelm to find an identity. This framework, however, creates tension between substance and form that the novel makes thematic at various points. Wilhelm's concern with such issues appears even in his involvement with the business world. As the conversation between him and Werner moves from Wilhelm's poems to business matters (before Wilhelm leaves his parents' home), Werner criticizes his friend for not seeing the relationship between form and content in business documentation: "Leider siehst du nicht, mein Freund, wie Form und Sache hier nur eins ist, eins ohne das andere nicht bestehen könnte" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 389). Although Werner's comment refers to double entry bookkeeping, it introduces a discussion about genres, i.e. the connection of substance and form (novel vs. drama), and also reveals Wilhelm's lack of understanding of the genre. In a reflexive moment, when Wilhelm looks at his own writing, he comes to realize that form and content must complement each other: "Gewöhnt, auf diese Weise sich selbst zu quälen, griff er [...] sein Talent als Dichter und Schauspieler, mit hämischer Kritik von allen Seiten an. Er sah in seinen

Arbeiten nichts als eine geistlose Nachahmung einiger hergebrachter Formen, ohne inneren Wert” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 431). Wilhelm sees in the example of his own writing that simply reproducing empty forms leads to immature and empty art. He even scrutinizes his acting talent the same way—and the result is not favorable.⁶² Despite this, he does not give up acting. Furthermore, his continuing involvement with the theater allows for scrutinizing the question of substance and form as it relates to genre.

The discussion in the seventh chapter of Book Five about the novel and drama reflects an inner split in Wilhelm as a reader. Even as a child, when he read Tasso’s epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*, he treated drama typically by staging it in the puppet theater. Despite earlier successes with the *Puppenspiel*, however, this particular performance was a disaster that resulted in Wilhelm’s failure as an actor: “ich [hatte] vergessen, daß doch jeder wissen müsse, was und wo er es zu sagen habe” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 380). Not only did he forget his memorized lines—indicating a decline in the capacity for intensive reading—but in trying to recuperate his failure, he confused genres:

[I]ch, der mich als Tancred vorne an gedacht hatte, fing, allein auftretend, einige Verse aus dem Heldengedicht herzusagen an. Weil aber die Stelle gar zu bald ins Erzählende übergang, und ich in meiner eignen Rede endlich als dritte Person vorkam, auch der Gottfried, von dem die Sprache war, nicht herauskommen wollte; so mußte ich eben unter großem Gelächter meiner Zuschauer wieder abziehen. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 380)

Despite the attempt to stage himself, Wilhelm could not resist the force of “narrative,” and instead of playing a role, he narrated Tancred’s story. He violated the epic genre by staging Tasso’s poem and then violated his own staging by narrating the text.⁶³ This failure was also a

⁶² “Seinem Schauspieler-Talente ging es nicht besser” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 431).

⁶³ According to Goethe’s essay “Über epische und dramatische Dichtung,” the temporal component is an important feature of these genres: “ihr großer wesentlicher Unterschied beruht aber darin, daß der Epiker die Begebenheit als *vollkommen vergangen* vorträgt, und der Dramatiker sie als *vollkommen gegenwärtig* darstellt” (FA, Vol. 1/18, 445).

sign for Wilhelm that he should not confuse the genres and prompted him, for the moment, to abandon the theater, as he would later retreat from the stage. But he did not learn, and the novel continues to present the confusion of genres for him as a reader.

From childhood already, Wilhelm had found references for his life in plays and transformed epic forms and other narrated stories into theater: “Meiner Leidenschaft, jeden Roman, den ich las, jede Geschichte, die man mich lehrte, in einem Schauspiele darzustellen, konnte selbst der unbiegsamste Stoff nicht widerstehen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 381). According to his own reflection, Wilhelm violated the rules of narrative literature by staging narrative texts. And while this tendency was characteristic of his childhood, it also defined him as a young adult, when he rebelled against the role of protagonist in narrative literature and *Bildungsroman* and instead continued on his path with the drama by mounting the stage as Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

Goethe’s *Lehrjahre*, of course, includes a famous debate about the novel and drama that reflects the contemporary discussions about the two forms:

Im 18. Jahrhundert versuchen Roman und Romantheorie in einer Art ‘gattungstheoretischen Parallelisierung’ am Aufstieg des neuen bürgerlichen Dramas teilzuhaben. [...] Innerhalb dieses Prozesses versucht die neue ‘niedere’ Gattung des Romans sich an der traditionell hochgeschätzten Form des Dramas zu orientieren und zu legitimieren. (Selbmann, *Theater im Roman* 29)

Wilhelm joins this debate and admits that he is “selbst noch nicht ganz im Klaren darüber” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 675). Consequently, we are left with Serlo’s monologue and his views on the differences between the novel and drama and their figures. But this also means that any conclusions about Goethe’s novel are undermined by the “authority” of a character who himself has an overriding interest in drama.

Roberts emphasizes, along these lines, that the debate blurs the boundaries between the two genres: “Applied to *Hamlet* these conclusions reveal the mixed character of Shakespeare’s

play—a novel hero in a tragedy of fate. Applied to the *Lehrjahre* they point to the tragic elements in the novel” (*Indirections* 154). Drama and novel, in fact, are much closer than Serlo’s reflections suggest. Paulin, referring to Blanckenburg’s *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), points out that the range and volume of passion in Shakespeare’s plays, as well as the variety of his characters, offer the novelist a solid foundation for establishing the genre as an art form (179). Writers of a new type of novel, he concludes, can learn a great deal from playwrights (Roberts, *Indirections* 164). Blanckenburg is further convinced that the contemporary audience is more familiar with plays, especially Shakespeare’s, than with novels, and his examples thus suggest that readers might relate better to novels through them (xix-xx).⁶⁴ Along similar lines, I argue that the *Lehrjahre* depicts a development from drama to novel by narrativizing a production of *Hamlet* and by showing Wilhelm’s metamorphosis from a dramatic hero to the protagonist of a novel, which indicates the rising authority of the novel as a literary genre.⁶⁵

The inconclusive debate also leads to questions about the qualities that drama and novel might share. One similarity is that both mediate life experiences. Thus, Selbmann claims, referring to Schiller, “[d]as Theater leistet dies durch seinen bildhaften Charakter, denn die Erschütterung durch die Tragödie und die Verspottung durch die Komödie machten Bildungsbestrebungen aus alltäglichen Lebenserfahrungen begreifbar” (*Theater im Roman* 19). Likewise, according to Bergk, the same holds true for novels: “Sie belehren daher uns, und nöthigen uns zum Nachdenken, indem sie uns köstliche und sauererworbene Erfahrungen darreichen” (*Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 205). As Wilhelm’s evaluation of *Hamlet* asserts: “[e]s

⁶⁴ Paulin argues that Goethe’s novel is evidence for this development in Germany (179).

⁶⁵ This emancipation of the novel’s hero correlates with the emancipation of the novel at the time, as Vosskamp points out in the *Stellenkommentar*: “Die Diskussion über die unterschiedlichen Vorzüge des Romans bzw. des Dramas geht auf die lange und schwierige Emanzipationsgeschichte des Romans und seiner poetologischen Legitimation zurück” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 1441).

sind keine Gedichte” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 552), by which he means that the plays seem real and relevant.⁶⁶

Wilhelm, however, must also come to realize that he is not meant to play the lead role in a drama. That is to say, staging and performing a play should not be his preferred reading strategy. Nevertheless, beyond just acting the lead role, he reads *Hamlet* as a novel by looking for references in it to his own passive and indecisive personality, which in turn begins pointing him toward reading narratives about people and their education, i.e. the *Bildungsroman*, as the novel allows for presenting activities, such as reading. Selbmann comes to the same conclusion in his book about the role of the theater in Goethe’s novel: “Die Identifikation mit einer Rolle, das Bestreben, ‘mit einem Helden zu einer Person zu werden,’ führt nicht zum Erfolg. Indem Wilhelm dies postuliert, beschreibt er nicht Hamlet, sondern einen Bildungsromanhelden und damit sich selbst” (*Theater im Roman* 70). But Selbmann does not reflect further about what this kind of reading implies. By contrast, I am suggesting that reading *Hamlet* constitutes a significant part of Wilhelm’s education as reader by showing that reading can actually promote (his) *Bildung*. In this context, even Jarno makes a comment that legitimates Wilhelm’s involvement with the theater, as Selbmann notes: “Jarno rückt deshalb die Verbindung von Theater und Welt in seinem Vergleich zurecht: Wilhelm habe ‘nicht das Theater, sondern die Welt beschrieben’ (L 455). Damit aber legitimiert Jarno nachträglich Wilhelms Bildungsweg über das Theater als eine notwendige Stufe!” (Selbmann, *Theater im Roman* 66). By reading the *Bekenntnisse* and the scroll, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and then, narrating his life-story for Therese, Wilhelm accepts his role as the protagonist of the novel. With the conclusion of the

⁶⁶ Selbmann understands “Gedichte” as “fiction”: “Wilhelm sieht in den Stücken Shakespeares menschliche ‘Schicksale’; die Theaterstücke sind ihm nicht ‘Gedichte’, also Fiktion, sondern reinste Wirklichkeit” (*Theater im Roman* 68). Along similar lines, Kontje understands Shakespeare’s work in this context as “the book that contains all reality” (*Private Lives* 70).

Hamlet episode, he has simply broken away from the stage to arrive at the narrative genre. This crucial shift is well marked by Therese's reaction to the prospect of hearing Wilhelm's story: "das deutet auf einen komplizierten Roman, und zeigt mir, daß Sie auch etwas zu erzählen haben" (FA, Vol. 1/9, 823). And finally, once Wilhelm has moved from drama to narrative, he can become a member of the Society, which would have him read narratives by rewriting them. With the acceptance of a new reading strategy, moreover, Wilhelm can also accept his role as the protagonist of a narrative, a *Bildungsroman*, and the fictional construction of his self. As a member of the *Turmgesellschaft*, he will also be a member of the authoring group that will write and shape the *Lehrjahre* of future members, and this situation actually points to the collective "authorship" in the *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821/1829).

2.5 TEXTUAL AND VISUAL READING

The reading situations in the *Lehrjahre* explore a number of important transitions: between intensive and extensive forms, communal and solitary settings, and oral presentation and silence. As I have shown, all of these shifts reflect changes in reading behaviors over the course of the eighteenth century. However, Wilhelm's personal development as a reader, which underlines his *Bildung*, adds to the historical components. Another such historically based opposition, which connects reading to the theater, comes from the relationship between verbal and visual representation.⁶⁷

Ich weiß, wie du mir das Büchelchen entwendetest und das ganze Stück auswendig lerntest, ich wurde erst gewahr, als du eines Abends dir einen Goliath

⁶⁷ Lessing maps out the difference between visual art and literature in his *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766).

und David von Wachs machtest, sie beide gegen einander perorieren ließest, dem Riesen endlich einen Stoß gabst und sein unförmliches Haupt auf einer großen Stecknadel mit wächsernem Griff dem kleinen David in die Hand klebstest. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 364)

By molding his characters as wax puppets, the child Wilhelm gave his defining idea a physical existence. He found a way to make written words into plastic objects, here puppets. Kurth summarizes this kind of engagement with texts as an internalization process that also involves artistic shaping: “Wilhelm neigte dazu, Gelesenes in sich aufzunehmen, es mehr oder weniger schöpferisch zu verarbeiten, das Erzeugnis als sein geistiges Eigentum zu betrachten und es später, ohne sich dieses Verfahrens der Aneignung ursprünglich fremder Ideen voll bewußt zu sein, als eigenes Gedankengut vorzutragen” (208). Such hand-wrought work is not limited to ideas, however, but includes fictional worlds as well. Furthermore, as physical realization, this kind of reading introduces a visual element, as we can see in Wilhelm’s comparison of reading with seeing images: “es waren Stellen, die ich auswendig wußte, deren Bilder mich umschwebten” (FA, Vol. 1/9, 378). And images, which play an important role in the history of reading, are also crucial in Goethe’s novel, as the painting *Der kranke Königssohn*, which appears in the novel as early as reading, suggests.⁶⁸

Although it does not constitute a textual object⁶⁹ in Wilhelm’s own readings, the painting takes on an increasingly important role within the novel and also in his education as a reader.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Images, especially mental ones, play a crucial role in the reading process according to Iser: “Der zentrale Modus passiver Synthesen [die sich im Lesevorgang entwickeln,] ist das Bild” (220) and “Das Bild ist die Erscheinungsweise des imaginären Gegenstandes” (228).

⁶⁹ Interestingly Voßkamp treats the paintings in the novel not only as pictures or images, but also as intertextual references and even characters (‘*Ein anderes Selbst*’ 33-53).

⁷⁰ *Der kranke Königssohn*, of course, is a well known story, or narrative text. Schweitzer discusses the possible paintings that might have provided a model for Goethe’s novel. Furthermore, he argues that Goethe develops the discussion of the painting into a motif that connects the *Lehrjahre* with the *Wanderjahre*. Roberts sees it as the “inner key to the novel” that leads up to Wilhelm’s identification with Hamlet (“Wilhelm Meister and Hamlet” 66, 79). He argues that the painting is a symbol and key to all the mirroring patterns in the novel (*Indirections* 14). Furthermore, the picture of the king’s sick son, along with *Hamlet*, defines not only Wilhelm as a character, but also

While Roberts concludes that the picture provides an understanding of Wilhelm's relationship to his family, and I agree with him in seeing it as a structuring element, I would also extend his suggestion from the third book to the whole novel ("Wilhelm Meister and Hamlet" 100). The painting, in my view, intensifies the connection among its embedded texts by referring to an historical text by Plutarch that includes the biography of Demetrius. This obscure fact is significant for Wilhelm's growth as a reader and his admittance to the Society of the Tower, where he finds his own biography documented. The secondary literature also emphasizes the connection between the painting and Shakespeare's play. Furthermore, and as Schweitzer emphasizes, Wilhelm's understanding changes from time to time as he focuses on different aspects of the image throughout the course of the novel (423-24). The painting, moreover, shares characteristics with other embedded narratives, because it triggers Wilhelm to interpret it. His special interest in paintings, moreover, particularly in *Der kranke Königssohn*, is narcissistic: "[H]e expresses a liking for pictorial art only to the extent that he can personally identify with its subject matter, as in the case of 'der kranke Königssohn,'" (71) Dye emphasizes. And Erika Nolan claims that mirroring is its main function, to which I would add that Wilhelm's self-regarding perspective is characteristic of all his reading and reflects one of his strategies in reading.

The aesthetic value of the painting is questionable, the Abbé says: "Es war eben nicht das beste Gemälde, nicht gut zusammengesetzt, von keiner sonderlichen Farbe, und die Ausführung durchaus manieriert" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 422). However, it is not its artistic quality that is important here, but rather Wilhelm's changing interpretations, which also reflect his changing behavior as a

the narrative structure of the novel (31). Similarly, Kawa sees the painting as a central structural element (342), and Ammerlahn sees it as a key motif that is present in the whole novel connecting the mistakes and goals in Wilhelm's *Bildung*: the theater, the Tower, and certain characters ("Goethe und Wilhelm Meister" 49-50).

reader.⁷¹ Accordingly, Goethe's protagonist interprets the painting differently depending on the contexts in which he encounters or remembers it.⁷² Its reoccurrence in the novel, moreover, draws attention to the importance of images in the history of reading and in reading instruction, which is well documented:⁷³ "Pictures, he [Claude Fleury]⁷⁴ acknowledged, were 'very appropriate for striking the imagination of children and fixing [things in] their memory; it is the writing of ignorant [uneducated] people'" (Julia 266). This mental process, which Fleury recognized even a century earlier, is important for reading. However, Goethe's novel shows that the theater plays a central role in this regard by bridging the reading of images and the reading of texts.

In fact, Wilhelm consciously selects theatrical texts for his childhood reading, although there were certainly other books in his father's library. The importance of these texts is to engage his imagination, where a first step requires him to translate a text into physical reality. Wilhelm's creation of the wax puppets anticipates his treatment of the Hamlet-figure in this regard. His involvement in the Shakespeare production is his last major attempt to actualize reading within

⁷¹ "Dadurch kommt das den Vorstellungsobjekten jeweils hinzugewonnene Zeitmoment in seine volle Dimension. Bildet es das einzig Neue, das der Leser in jeder Lektüre dem Text hinzufügt, so beginnt diese den Vorstellungsobjekten geschaffene Zeitstelle deren Individualisierung" (Iser 242).

⁷² He is first reminded of the painting by the Unbekannte at the beginning of the novel (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 422), and he sees the painting again in Natalie's possession at its conclusion (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 892). Ammerlahn discusses the different scenes in the novel where the painting appears. He describes in great detail the contexts, their significance, and Wilhelm's changing interpretation according to his personal situation ("Goethe und Wilhelm Meister" 53-61). See also Erika Nolan 140-42.

⁷³ The early spelling book (*Fibel*) with its images helped children to learn reading: "Als Knabe von vier Jahren hatte ich bereits von meiner Mutter das Lesen erlernt, eine Sache, die mir an sich sehr langweilig und albern vorkam, wozu ich mich durch die schönen Bilder des ABC-Buchs locken ließ" ("As a boy of age four, I learned to read from my mother. Reading seemed to me boring and foolish, but the nice pictures of the alphabet book lured me into reading") quotes Schenda *Die Memoiren des Ritters von Lang* (50). Lyons highlights the role of illustration in the learning process, especially in memorizing: "The illustration, in other words, had an important role in the memorizing process. Sometimes the image accompanied a text, but remained separated from it. At other times, more inventive visual techniques were adopted: text was superimposed on illustration, for example, or perhaps the text itself was transformed into an image" (330). And although books with illustration were expensive, adds Julia, "[m]any children had in fact been introduced to reading by *Figures de la Bible*, a genre that combined images representing the various episodes of Holy Scripture and a commentary" (266).

⁷⁴ An ecclesiastical historian in the early eighteenth century.

the theater, where reality and fiction meet and where he can make fictions physical by embodying ideas. The *Puppentheater* of his childhood fulfilled the same function, as it introduced Wilhelm to theatrical performance and simultaneously motivated him to read. Bennett's description of the difference between a concrete performance and silent reading is useful here:

In a performed drama [...] the physicalness and psychological unfolding of the fiction are not imaginary but actual (i.e. exactly located by my senses, say fifty feet southwest of where I am sitting in the theatre), yet at the same time artificial; and the concept of the artificial, unlike that of the imaginary, does imply a certain opposition to the real. The imaginary object, at least potentially, is a natural continuation or reverberation of the real (like memory, hence the appropriateness of the "epic preterite"), whereas the artificial object, if it resembles reality, is a deliberate counterfeit. (*Modern Drama* 17)

Although Wilhelm appreciates the imaginary world that books open for him,⁷⁵ his passion for the theater (both in his childhood and in his young adulthood) is motivated by a drive to translate fiction into physical reality. But this reality is also threatened by the artificial, which according to Bennett only counterfeits reality. Nonetheless, such imitation, when balanced by irony, plays an important role in Wilhelm's development as a protagonist and reader. The imaginary object is able to connect reality and fiction without concretizing or banalizing fiction. Thus, Wilhelm wishes to find physical similarities between himself and Hamlet: "Je mehr ich mich in die Rolle studiere, desto mehr sehe ich, daß in meiner ganzen Gestalt kein Zug der Physiognomie ist, wie Shakespeare seinen Hamlet aufstellt" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 674).⁷⁶ On the other hand, Wilhelm's

⁷⁵ "Autor und Leser also teilen in sich das Spiel der Phantasie [...] Denn das Lesen wird erst dort zum Vergnügen, wo unsere Produktivität ins Spiel kommt, und das heißt, wo Texte eine Chance bieten, unsere Vermögen zu betätigen. [...] Die vereinigte Anstrengung des Autors und des Lesers läßt das konkrete und imaginäre Objekt entstehen, das das Werk des Geistes ist" (Iser 176-77).

⁷⁶ Scholars all agree that there are similarities between the two figures. Kawa highlights that both protagonists lose their mothers and, due to the changes in their family, both have to fight for their inheritance (259). Even Bonds emphasizes the similarities: both figures are supposed to follow the careers of their fathers, whose deaths play significant roles in their lives; both stand at crossroads in their lives; and finally, both hear their fathers' voices as the voices of ghosts (103).

reading strategy reveals his failure to understand that an actor should be able to play any character with the help of his talent and imagination.

Wilhelm's treatment of Hamlet resembles the behavior of some contemporary readers of Goethe's *Werther* (1774).⁷⁷ Whereas a theatrical production actualizes a text for an audience, a novel (or even a play, if only read) engages the imagination of a reader, who must deliver the actualization himself. Over the course of the novel, Wilhelm must make the transition from the theater to narrative texts and a new kind of reading. This means that he must learn to actualize texts through his imagination and not just by staging them, i.e. not just by transforming them into some physical reality. This is an important issue for Wilhelm's *Bildung* as a reader and is in keeping with Iser's description of the mental process of reading: "In der Lektüre fiktionaler Texte müssen wir uns deshalb immer Vorstellungen bilden, weil die 'schematisierten Ansichten' des Textes uns nur ein Wissen davon bieten, über welche Voraussetzungen der imaginäre Gegenstand erzeugt werden soll" (222). Forming mental images is what Wilhelm has to learn as he encounters reading situations.⁷⁸ He starts with concrete images through performance. Over the course of the novel, however, he slowly sees the theater as a mediator between himself and the text. In this process, exploring different social forms through silent reading is crucial and in accordance with Wittmann's observation that private reading engages the imagination: "Freilich

⁷⁷ "Doch der größere Teil der Leser begnügte sich mit einer veräußerlichten Identifizierung—indem sie die Kleidung des Helden (blauer Frack und gelbe Beinkleid) zum Signal rebellischer Jugend erhoben und Kulturgegenstände wie die bekannte Werther-tasche kauften. Einem geringen Teil schließlich gelang die ästhetische Objektivierung, die Unterscheidung zwischen Lesewelt und Alltagsrealität. [...] Die bürgerliche Zeitmentalität veränderte sich: mit der Gliederung und 'Departementalisierung' des Tagesablaufs und der Zeit wurde auch der mühelose Wechsel von den Phanatsiewelten der Lektüre in den Alltag allmählich erlernt, die Gefahr einer Vermengung der Lebenssphären reduziert" (Wittmann, "Gibt es eine Leserevolution" 436-7, 439).

⁷⁸ Although Iser does not refer here to Kant's concept of schema, his usage of 'schematized' clearly refers to Kant: "If we are to become capable of subsuming objects under concepts in judgments, that is, some mechanism, or technology, must be identified that can bridge the gap between the (sensible) world of appearances and the (intelligible) world of concepts. To solve this fundamental problem of uniting the otherwise heterogeneous structures of intuited phenomenon and category, which is laid out in the 'Schematism' chapter of the 'Transzendente Analytik' (179-95), Kant turns to a special product of the synthesizing imagination ('Einbildungskraft')" (Muenzer, "Goethe's Metaphysics of Immanence" 10).

konnte gerade das leise Lesen, bei dem alle Emotionen internalisiert werden mussten, den Rückzug ins Reich der Phantasie auch intensivieren” (Wittmann, “Gibt es eine Leserrevolution” 438). The new type of reader in Goethe’s novel, therefore, must learn to use the imagination, which also means “schematized” images.

Wilhelm’s mature reading strategy also leads to his own reinvention through rewriting the scroll. And this gives him greater authority over his own life, as he becomes a member of the *Turmgesellschaft*. The Society, in turn, ironically contributes to the creation of a new reading community through its ambivalent relationship to the theater. And while it is clear that its guiding members do not agree with Wilhelm’s theatrical career, they create a theatrical setting for his initiation into the Society. As Bennett concludes in his discussion of the modern theater during the early twentieth century, the “‘theater of readers’ must be *forced* into the immediate vicinity of the literary, must foreshadow directly a reformed type of reading, a reading no longer anonymous or solitary, but [...] within a community whose dynamics determines constantly and specifically who we are” (*Theater as Problem* 133-34). Interestingly, Goethe’s novel suggests a similar community by ironically eliminating the real theater from the reading process and creating an elite society that stages its own readerly mode and its own group of new readers.

An important component of the new reading community is the archive.⁷⁹ The *Turmgesellschaft* has not only documented Wilhelm’s life, but has also archived it as fiction. As a reader and member of the Society, Wilhelm becomes part of this archive, along with his life-story, “Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre.” In his discourse analysis of Wilhelm’s socialization, Friedrich Kittler comes to a similar conclusion about the role of the *Turmgesellschaft*. Agreeing with Kittler, I see the Society functioning as an archive that collects, documents, preserves, and

⁷⁹ See Bahr’s *The Novel as Archive: The Genesis, Reception, and Criticism of Goethe’s ‘Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre’* and Neuhaus’s “Die Archivfiktion in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.”

shares information: “Die Turmgesellschaft archiviert alles mögliche: Bilder, Körper, Texte. Im Schloss sind Gemälde gesammelt, im Saal der Vergangenheit mumifizierte Leichnahme und Urphänomene, im Einweihungsraum Handschriften” (“Über die Sozialisation” 100). Interestingly, Kittler further identifies two different tendencies in this collection: the rejection of culturally transmitted perspectives and the invention of individualism (101). Both activities, reading and writing, are equally important in the Tower’s discourse network, moreover, which involves both authorship and readership (103). For Kittler, this discourse leads to the invention of the individual and childhood (106). The result is a literary text produced by an individual who in turn is shaped by literary texts (107). In conclusion Kittler sees the *Bildungsroman*, similar to the Tower, as a network of different media (109)⁸⁰ and suggests that the socialization of the individual happens through literature (113).⁸¹ Schöbler considers the *Turmgesellschaft* similarly in terms of an archiving function. According to her, art acquires a new status in the last books of the novel, where the artifact is no longer an original work of art, but an archive of something already existing and standing in opposition to the oral tradition (122). Furthermore, at the end of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the novel constitutes itself as an archive of heterogenic texts. This feature gives the real readers the power to reconstruct the coherence and the unity of these texts (Meuthen, *Eins und doppelt* 77), which of course anticipates the narrative mode of the *Wanderjahre* (92).

The archival interest of the Society raises still other questions about literature, including the legitimization of literary authority. In shaping a new genre, the *Bildungsroman*, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* inevitably established links with canonical works like the *Bible* and authors like

⁸⁰ Including religious confessions, literary portraits, historical biographies of heroes, psychological exploration of the unconscious, the nuclear family, and literary studies (Kittler, “Über die Sozialisation” 109)

⁸¹ See also “Lesen wurde zu einem sozial indifferenten, individuellen Prozess” (Wittmann, “Gibt es eine Leserevolution” 428).

Tasso and Shakespeare. Minden argues that “[s]etting itself up in a certain sense as the antithesis of *Hamlet* is an important means by which Goethe’s novel legitimates itself as literature.” And, he continues, “[t]he whole issue of literary authority is implicated” (35). In my view, these issues cannot be limited to the discussion of Shakespeare’s play, but are intertwined with the story as a whole in featuring Wilhelm as a reader.

The intertextual quotations and embedded narratives are differentiated not only through their existence outside of Goethe’s novel, moreover, but also through their status as private or public texts. The story of David and Goliath, Tasso’s *Jerusalem*, and *Hamlet* had been printed and widely circulated even before the boom in book production. By contrast, both the *Bekenntnisse* and the scroll entitled “Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre” are manuscripts that did not enjoy public circulation. Schmaus argues that the intertextuality of novels around 1800 facilitated communication and authorship through quotation (“Lebenskunst” 256). In the present context, this suggests that the reading subject at the end of the eighteenth century was constituted by pre-existing texts and that he, in turn, would become text. Wilhelm’s new social function can be defined as being read.⁸²

⁸² Muenzer comes to a similar conclusion when analyzing reflexivity in Goethe’s *Werther*: “Furthermore, when he requests in this spirit that she [Lotte] transmits his story through her brothers and sisters [...] he sets the stage for his own transformation from person into a book. Werther himself thus intuitively prepares his presentation to a world of sympathetic souls as the immensely popular ‘Büchlein’ (p. 7), *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*” (*Figures of Identity* 35). This transformation of the protagonist into a book points toward the *Lehrjahre* and marks the tendency that reconfigures the self. See also Edmunds 45, 59.

3.0 FRANZ STERNBALDS WANDERUNGEN

Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798/1843), one of the first Romantic *Bildungsroman*, is also the first novel in the tradition of Goethe's *Lehrjahre*. Despite their differences, Kahn argues, a discussion of Tieck's novel is unthinkable without the *Lehrjahre* (40). However, the discussion of the two novels in the secondary literature lacks or has been limited to scarce comments in terms of their positions on contemporary trends in reading and their relationship to the history of reading. I will argue that, like the *Lehrjahre*, *Sternbald* contributes to the discourse on the education of readers by investigating and fictionalizing changes in readerly behaviors over time. Both novels incorporate the education of their protagonists as readers into their portrayals of *Bildung* to invite reflections on the history of and modern trends in reading. By portraying their characters in the act of reading, they investigate the relationship between intensive and extensive reading. Both also explore reading behavior in various social forms from solitary to communal reading. But Tieck's *Sternbald* more thoroughly revisits the oral tradition than Goethe's *Lehrjahre* by emphasizing reading aloud.

Wilhelm Meister places its protagonist in a series of reading situations that together investigate a transitional period between intensive and extensive reading during the second half of the eighteenth century. Wilhelm as a child reads intensively. That is, he repeatedly reads and memorizes biblical stories. His fascination with reading, however, soon becomes extensive: he reads one book after another with insatiable hunger, although he does not fully embrace this new kind of reading and continually returns to his childhood practices. Goethe's novel thus explores the transition from intensive to extensive reading, as well as various social forms of reading,

including practices that are both vocalized and silent. Wilhelm's involvement with the theater provides an ideal setting for this kind of investigation, as a theatrical production requires different kinds of readings, including a variety of social forms. By exploring the range of such forms in Goethe's novel, I have argued that it provides a context where a new kind of reading community can be investigated that produces and archives the biographies of its members in both oral situations and print. Wilhelm's education as a reader concludes with his admittance to this community of readers, which is why the novel ends with the reading and simultaneous rewriting of his own biography. His readerly *Bildung* leads Goethe's protagonist to writing, which is itself a function of reading, and this writing, in turn, contributes to Wilhelm's understanding of his life story.

Tieck's *Sternbald* has traditionally been considered the first Romantic novel. Investigating it in the context of the emerging print culture that changed reading behavior is imperative because, as Ong notes, "[t]he Romantic Movement marks the beginning of the end of the old orality-grounded rhetoric" (158). As a result, Romantic rhetoric, according to Schanze, has a paradoxical relationship with the proliferating mass produced print culture that led to the rise of the novel as the leading literary genre. On the one hand, Romanticism defined itself through the novel, which it embedded in the book as a medium. On the other hand, however, rhetoric promotes orality. Hence in Romanticism a new and paradoxical phenomenon arises that Schanze calls printed orality ("gebuchte Mündlichkeit") ("Romantische Rhetorik 337). Tieck's novel, I will argue, deals with this paradox and investigates a new relationship between print culture and orality.

Sternbald has also been called the first *Künstlerroman*.¹ As Behler suggests, it “is not only an artist novel depicting the developing and maturing of a young artist, [...] but also a novel on art itself, making art its central theme and presenting a particular notion of art” (253). Agreeing partially with this view, I propose that the novel uses art as a framework to discuss contemporary issues of reading in their historical determination. The young Franz Sternbald leaves his master, the painter Albrecht Dürer, his best friend Sebastian, and the city of Nürnberg to undertake a journey through Europe during the Reformation. The beginning of the novel marks a turning point in his life. Although he leaves Nürnberg, he does not end his apprenticeship, but rather continues his *Bildung*. Franz’s journey through the early modern German, Dutch, and Italian landscapes not only promotes his education as professional painter, it also fulfills a quest to find his childhood love and familial roots. Throughout his journey he meets people of different classes and various professions—including other artists—like Lukas, Dürer’s colleague and friend; Rudolf Florestan, an Italian poet; Vansen, a Dutch businessman; Messy, a smith journeyman; Roderigo and Ludoviko, Italian travelers; and the countess Adelheid, whose sister is Franz’s beloved, Marie. And throughout Franz listens to their stories. Although *Sternbald*, according to Behler, makes a statement about art, its protagonist’s success as a painter remains questionable (249).² Franz Sternbald, the dedicated and ambitious young

¹ “Ludwig Tieck’s *Franz Sternbald’s Wanderings* is the first important manifestation of the novel during the period of early Romanticism, or rather its recreation if we relate this novel back to its older Romantic prototypes such as Cervantes” (Behler 248). “*Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* begründen in Deutschland die fruchtbare Gattung des romantischen Romans” (Anger 556).

² Compared to Wilhelm Meister, according to Kahn, Franz seems to be in a better position as an artist: “The hero [Wilhelm] becomes a ‘Meister:’ through ‘Entsagung.’ The world, reality, comes first and the individual second. A compromise at the expense of youthful dream is achieved. In *Sternbald* the opposite is true. The hero is a dedicated artist, not a superficial one like Wilhelm who, after occupying himself at length with his and the theater’s shortcomings, ends up a physician. Franz’s life is devoted to art. But ‘Kunst’ here has the same meaning as ‘Poesie’ in Friedrich Schlegel’s *Gespräch über die Poesie*” (Kahn 45). Other scholars do not share Kahn’s view and argue that the novel offers a critique of Franz Sternbald’s professional success. Thus, as Blackall points out, Franz is criticized in the novel: “Franz tells Lukas that he lacks the courage to paint what he sees, and Lukas suggests that this is because he is too respectful of objects and too confused by too many objects” (161) and “Bolz tells Sternbald

artist, is not satisfied with his own painting³ and, as Sammons points out, he paints very little over the course of the novel (“Tieck’s Franz Sternbald” 35). As a result, the differing reactions to the novel in the secondary literature (Anger 545-549) lead to the question: what can be learned from a *Künstlerroman* whose protagonist fails as an artist?

Even though the novel invites discussion about art and the status of artists, I agree with those critics who understand its artistic theme as a vehicle to investigate issues other than art. Kontje explores the question by suggesting that *Sternbald* is less interested in art than in the literary developments of its time: “Tieck addresses the problematic status of literature that had become a substitute for and escape from the retrograde political situation in his contemporary Germany. [...] Tieck in particular lends himself to an attempt to understand literature in its institutional context” (*Private Lives* 81-82). For Kontje, the novel thus makes the struggle of professional artists and their place in the arts and business community thematic (95). He focuses on scenes in the novel that feature the artistic and financial dilemmas facing professional authors (82-83), such as artistic productivity, the financial possibilities of art, and definitions of artistic success. These issues, Kontje argues, analyze “the tension between Romantic ideology and the demands of artistic professionalism” (95). Rather than focus on the protagonist and his personal struggles, my investigation explores Franz and his readerly environment. This change in focus

that his constant enthusiasm will prevent him from being a great painter” (163). Schmidt highlights that Franz is distanced from fine arts: “Als Künstler vermag er sich nur noch vorzustellen, wie er malen *würde* [...] Tiefer denn je fühlt er den historischen Abstand zwischen sich und der alten Malerwelt” (Thomas Schmidt 92). Finally, Blackall summarizes this phenomenon: “It is an artist-novel, which *Lovell* is not, but it also deals with the misleading capacity of imagination when this is not guided by some more rational power. That enthusiasm and ecstasy alone does not produce paintings is something Sternbald has to learn. He does learn it—to a certain degree, but he never really replaces that knowledge by something else, by a more productive personal engagement with the world of phenomena. So this is a novel about an artist who never becomes a great artist—at least not in what we have of the novel, for the work is unfinished” (160).

³ “Wir hören zwar von vielen Bildern, die Sternbald malt, und auch von solchen, denen aus berufenem Munde hohe Anerkennung gespendet wird. Doch Sternbald selbst ist mit kaum einem Bild ganz zufrieden und kann mit keinem Bilde sich gänzlich Genüge tun” (Korff 68).

will shift the attention from the financial status of literature to Tieck's subtle understanding of the readerly environment of his own time and his advocacy for the revival of the oral tradition.

Whereas Kontje reads the novel as an exploration of artistic production and its financial consequences, I will read it as an exploration of artistic reception and show how such reception contributed to the contemporary discussion about new and old trends in reading. My analysis will focus on Franz Sternbald's journey, because it provides a framework for discussions, storytelling, and reading. I will argue that *Sternbald* broaches the issue of the institutionalization of literature by considering the role of the reader and his changing position in history. By presenting Franz as a reader and a listener, Tieck's novel uses the historical setting of the oral tradition to problematize contemporary trends in reading, such as the consequences of the shift from intensive to extensive reading, the transition from reading aloud to reading silently, and the changes in social forms from communal to solitary reading. In this context, negative characterizations of the hero in the secondary literature, such as "Franz wanders through life, almost without a goal, stopping here and there, dreaming, experiencing romantic adventures, 'himmelhochjauchzendzudebetrübt,' absorbing nothing and everything" (Kahn 45), seem typical for the modern (extensive) reader, who continually moves on from one text to another. Nor should it surprise us that the novel features a great variety of texts,⁴ as these allow it to explore different reading behaviors. Storytelling, poetry recitation, correspondence, debates, and conversations all provide occasions in which Franz participates as a reader. Although he is part of what appears to be an oral culture—which connects him to earlier reading practices—he also

⁴ This has also been noted in the literature. Ribbat, for example, comments on diversity in a different context: "Schließlich ist das Werk ein 'romantischer Roman' als ein, sei es aus Zufall, sei es aus innerer Notwendigkeit, fragmentarisches Buch und zugleich als ein Text des nahezu universellen Sprachgebrauchs: In ihm wird erzählt und gesungen, Briefe werden geschrieben und Disputationen geführt, es gibt leichtfertige Plauderei und ergriffenes Gestammel" ("Ludwig Tieck: *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* [1798]" 58).

exhibits the traits of the modern reader by consuming one story after another without revisiting them. In fact, like Goethe's *Lehrjahre*, Tieck's novel invites an analysis of the intersection of traditional and contemporary trends in the history of reading through a diversity of reading occasions. But unlike its model, *Sternbald* is not interested in highlighting the transition from intensive to extensive reading. In fact, it suggests that intensive reading has already become historical, and the general mode of reading extensive. For Tieck, the older forms of orality and intensive reading also remain sufficiently present to serve as a contrast with newer forms. Consequently, his novel goes on to establish a "secondary orality," much like the orality that Ong suggests arose in the twentieth century: "The electronic age is also an age of 'secondary orality', the orality of telephones, radio, and television, which depends on writing and print for its existence" (3). Of course, the content of orality and the means of communication in the second half of the twentieth century were different at the end of the eighteenth century. But the forms are similar, especially with regard to group formation and communication. Like Ong, Tieck contrasts the primary orality of the sixteenth century with a secondary one that is influenced and established by new a technology—that is, print culture. He thereby not only documents the historical shift from intensive to extensive reading, but by introducing this secondary orality, he also offers a critique of the reading trends of his time. By synthesizing contemporary reading practices with the historical past of the oral tradition, *Sternbald* suggests that certain features of orality can enhance reading and promote discussions through which solitary readers can find community. Whereas Goethe's *Lehrjahre* used the contemporary world of the theater to explore reading, Tieck's novel, I will argue, utilizes sixteenth-century art to reflect on its history, trends, and development. *Sternbald* thus surprisingly shifts our attention in the discussion from the aesthetic reception of images back to written texts, from seeing back to

reading, and from painting back to writing. And it achieves this shift by figuring its protagonist as a young painter who encounters—through reading or listening—different kinds of texts through the course of his journey.

3.1 ART AND READING

Much like the theater in the *Lehrjahre*, the art-scene in *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* provides a basis for narrating Franz's *Bildung* as a reader. Art connects this process to the history of reading, which includes the development of a culture of discussion. Investigating the novel's discussion of the arts, therefore, is crucial to its analysis of reading. The fine arts have always been interested in books.⁵ Paintings, drawings, and prints of readers are not only relevant to the history of reading, but also provide a source for understanding its physical environments.⁶ It should not surprise us, therefore, that Tieck's novel frequently portrays people reading. Some of the scenes are paintings, while others are constructed pictorially through language, as in the two following descriptions: "Gegenüber sieht man steile Felsen, auf denen Einsiedler Buße tun in andächtiger Stellung beten, einige lesen, einer melkt eine Ziege" (FSW 284); "sie [standen] vor einer kleinen Hütte, in der ein Licht brannte, das ihnen entgegenglänzte, ein Mann saß darin und las mit vieler Aufmerksamkeit in einem Buche, ein großer Rosenkranz hing an seiner Seite, über der Hütte war eine Glocke angebracht, die er abwechselnd anzog" (FSW 286).⁷ In both of these

⁵ Schön's book about the changes in reading behavior begins with and repeatedly refers to paintings and drawings that illustrate people reading (*Der Verlust* 1-16, 63-71, 79-80, 124-142, 147-159); see also Stewart's *The Look of Reading*.

⁶ Schön explores how reading books influenced both body posture and furniture design (*Der Verlust* 63-97).

⁷ All quotations from Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* come from Anger's *Studienausgabe*, published by the Reclam Verlag, and cited as FSW.

cases, reading is portrayed as an activity of the common people, akin to milking a goat or pulling a church bell. It does not belong just to the privileged and is shown as to be an ordinary activity. Although this attitude is characteristic of Tieck's time, however, reading was not universally popular during the age when *Sternbald* is set. Even if it features an oral culture in which storytelling, poem recitals, and songs dominate, it is clear that, for Tieck's purposes, reading books had also become an inescapable part of the civilized landscape. Likewise, and in contrast to the historical reality, the novel draws attention to solitary reading, which began to dominate the landscape only during the late eighteenth century. But the printed book is also undeniably present in Tieck's sixteenth century. A traveling businessman's solitary reading on a ship, for instance, appears alongside the idealistic depiction of reading in nature and the scholarly reading of Saint Jerome in his study in the well-known Dürer engraving.

This variety emphasizes different readerly reactions to texts. Whereas the businessman Vansen falls asleep in the company of a book, he becomes an active listener when Florestan's story is recited, suggesting that the silent and solitary reading behaviors of the eighteenth century might not suit everyone. However, despite this subtle hint, Rudolf's story presents a reading scene—in contrast to Vansen's reading behavior—in which solitary, silent reading seems ideal: “Dann setzte er sich in dem benachbarten Wäldchen nieder und las einen der italienischen Dichter, die er sehr liebte” (FSW 145). This description not only stands in the tradition of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century motif of reading in nature, it also recalls the motif's visual representation in paintings, drawing, woodcuts, and other forms of visual art.⁸ Moreover, these descriptions lead us to the question of what images and visual representation can reveal about trends in reading. Images of reading in the novel, in fact, help us to understand the relationship

⁸ See the textual and visual citations in Schön's chapter “Lesen im Freien” (*Der Verlust* 123-168).

between the fine arts and the history of reading, as paintings and other visual media serve both as aids to reading and as witnesses that capture the physical features of reading behavior.

Other images establish a more complex relationship to reading. For example, in one of his letters, Franz describes an engraving by Dürer, which he calls “der lesende Einsiedler” (“the reading hermit”) According to Anger, the description refers to the etching *Der heilige Hieronymus im Gehäus* (*St. Jerome in His Study*) (83). Here we can see Franz applying a reading strategy to the picture that is also characteristic of his own reading, when he listens to stories. That is, he devotes his attention to details that are relevant to his own life: “Wie ich da wieder unter Euch war! denn ich kannte die Stube, den Tisch und die runden Scheiben gleich wieder, die Dürer auf diesem Bilde von seiner eigenen Wohnung abgeschrieben hat” (*FSW* 83). He compares seeing the etching to the experience of seeing Dürer’s study, which was the model for the picture. We should, however, not be sidetracked by the fact that Franz discusses its representation of Dürer’s reality. More importantly, his discussion indicates that the etching is conceptualized as writing (“abgeschrieben” [“written down”] and not “abgemalt” [“portrayed”]). The conceptualization of writing embedded in a discussion on the visual arts suggests that Tieck prefers words and the activities associated with words, such as reading and writing, to visual presentation. The novel, I will show, demonstrates this preference at length.

Similar ways of representing images return later in the novel. When Franz visits the Sistine Chapel, for example, he sees Michelangelo’s work: “In der ruhigen Einsamkeit schaute Sternbald das erhabene Gedicht mit demütigen Augen an” (*FSW* 396). Significantly, the narrator refers to the painting as a “poem,” i.e. a written text, and thereby suggests that the reception of images in the novel reveals something about reading itself. That is to say, as narrative devices, Dürer’s etching and Michelangelo’s fresco confirm Franz’s habit of translating images into

reading strategies. In a gesture that contrasts with Lessing's exploration, in *Laokoon* (1766), of the difference between painting and literature, Tieck's novel investigates what the fine arts can tell us about literary reception. By introducing Dürer's etching, *Sternbald* establishes a close relationship between the two media. Woodcuts and engravings are easily portable, like books, and the subject matter of the picture adds to our understanding of the history of reading. The central figure in the etching, Saint Jerome (347-419), was responsible for the fifth-century Latin translation of the Bible, which became the dominant Scripture until the Reformation. Although Latin was not more available to people, this translation was the first step in bringing the Bible closer to the common reader. Dürer's etching, as an artifact in Tieck's novel, then, connects Luther's and Dürer's time to a period that would open the way for people to become readers of the Bible. Accordingly, the discussion of Dürer's etching reflects on the novel by using another historical layer to talk about issues of reading.

This link between Bible reading and the fine arts recurs throughout the novel.⁹ Furthermore, as Ong asserts, the *Holy Book*, by its origin, connected print and oral culture,¹⁰ since written records emerged from "an orally constituted sensibility and tradition" (99). In other words, Biblical stories were available to people in forms as varied as the printed book, orally narrated stories, and visual images. Franz highlights this early on in *Sternbald*, when he explains to Messy, the journeyman blacksmith, the value of his own artistic work: "Das menschliche Auge und Herz findet ein Wohlgefallen daran, die Bibel wird durch Gemälde verherrlicht, die Religion unterstützt, was will man von dieser Kunst mehr verlangen?" (FSW 23). While Franz appears to emphasize visual reception here, however, images also serve him as mediators of the written word, since paintings receive and interpret the Bible. Like Saint Jerome, the painter can

⁹ The historical setting of the Protestant Reformation, moreover, promotes this connection.

¹⁰ Frescos, Pope Gregory said, were the Bible of the illiterate (Diebold 10).

become a reader and interpreter of sacred texts. Along these lines, it is important to understand the historical relationship between visual and print culture. Visual communication, Scribner argues, played an important role in the spread of the ideas during the Reformation, the historical setting of the novel. Because images supplemented religious texts, popular culture, and, at the time, even literature (1-5), they contributed to the growth of literacy. Moreover, as Wenzel points out, their close connection is evident from the etymology of the verbs *schreiben* (to write) and *malen* (to paint), which highlights their primary function in documenting and establishing tradition.¹¹ And the acts of painting and writing are not only related through language, but also through the artifacts of the crafts: “Für die angemessene Beziehung des Schrift-Bild-Zusammenhanges wäre der Begriff ‘Textur’ (text) tatsächlich am ehesten geeignet, wäre er nicht durch die Buchkultur seiner ursprünglichen Bedeutung weitgehend entfremdet” (302). It is important to understand that, while print and visual culture have a common origin, their relationship to orality played a crucial role in the sixteenth century. Scribner argues that reading, listening, and looking were given equal weight (3). And all three activities play important roles in the configuration of the reading culture in Tieck’s novel. *Sternbald* explores this relationship not only through the pictorial quality of its language, but also through its investigation of the mutual influence that the fine arts and literature had on each other. Ultimately, the visual arts function here as a metaphor for reading. Although literacy rates were fairly low in the sixteenth century, allowing only a small, but growing educational elite to read (Scribner 2), Tieck uses this

¹¹ “*Schreiben* und *malen*, *schrift* und *gemald* stehen in mittelalterlichen Texten für zwei verschiedene Tätigkeits- und Sachvorstellungen, die bei aller Eigenständigkeit nicht vollständig gegeneinander ausdifferenziert sind. Es gibt eine partielle Überlagerung der beiden Bereiche, die sich semantisch darin manifestiert, daß *schreiben* und *malen* im Mittelhochdeutschen austauschbar erscheinen. [...] Aus der Perspektive der Neuzeit erscheint dieser Wortgebrauch womöglich als ein bloßes Stilmittel; die Etymologie der Wörter verweist jedoch auf einen primären, historisch zu rekonstruierenden Zusammenhang der Techniken des Schreibens, Malens, Modellierens und Gravierens bei der Sicherung der Überlieferung” (Wenzel 292-95).

time period as an historical backdrop to discuss trends in his own time and to promote the wide reading audience that was more characteristic for the eighteenth century.

In the relationship between the fine arts and literature, the written text has historically served as a source of inspiration for images and their visual re-interpretation. The Bible, for example, provided endless resources for the fine arts, which in turn interpreted religious texts. In Tieck's novel, Dürer's combination of literature and art offers a prime example: "Ich rücke also die biblische oder heidnische Geschichte manchmal meinen Zuschauern dadurch recht dicht vor die Augen, daß ich die Figuren in den Gewändern auftreten lasse, in denen sie sich selber wahrnehmen. Dadurch verliert ein Gegenstand das Fremde" (*FSW* 118). Tieck's Dürer uses paintings to help people understand biblical, or even pagan, stories that they know from their reading or from the oral tradition. In the process, however, he also emphasizes self-recognition. By associating a painting or a text with himself or herself, the viewer can better understand the subject matter, as Franz's reading strategy of recognizing himself in stories he has heard suggests. Thus, like the theater in the *Lehrjahre*, which Tieck's "auftreten" evokes, painting becomes a means of *Bildung* for both those involved in the production of artifacts (painters) and those involved with their reception (viewers).

Sternbald, however, does not limit the connection between image and text to sacred topics. Secular subjects and characters from literature also find their way into the visual realm, including the portrayal of Till Eulenspiegel, the protagonist of a Middle Low German folkloric book (*FSW* 107). The conversation about Lukas's engraving of Eulenspiegel (see also *FSW*, "Tafelanhang" 6) leads to a discussion about the book:

"Es ist eine Art von Dankbarkeit," sagte Meister Lukas, "daß ich über seine Schwänke oft so herzlich habe lachen müssen. Wie schon gesagt, es verstehen wenig Menschen die Kunst, sich an Tills Narrenstreichen so zu freuen als ich, weil sie es sogar mit dem Lachen ernsthaft nehmen; andern gefällt sein Buch

wohl, aber es kommt ihnen als etwas Unedles vor, dies Bekenntnis abzulegen; andern fehlt es wieder an Übung, das Possierliche zu verstehen und zu fassen, weil man sich vielleicht ebenso daran gewöhnen muß, wie man viele Gemälde sieht, ehe man über eins ein richtiges Urteil faßt." (FSW 108)

Lukas, Dürer's friend and colleague, talks about various readings of Eulenspiegel and expresses the frustration of an artist whose work has been misunderstood. After describing possible reactions to the book, he compares literary reception to the reception of paintings. Both talents have to be acquired: "[D]ie meisten Leute sind wahrlich mit dem Ernsthaften und Lächerlichen gleich fremd" (FSW 108). Accordingly, when Dürer continues the conversation, he condemns the general view that understanding art can be effortless.

Along similar lines, the novel refers to other paintings that have their sources in literature. Franz and Rudolf discuss a work by Francesco Traini, for example, and his connection to Dante: "Dieser Künstler hat den Dante mit besonderer Vorliebe studiert und in seiner Kunst auch etwas Ähnliches dichten wollen" (FSW 283-84). Even the language they use to speak of the painting establishes the connection between literature and the arts. "To compose" stands in Rudolf's words for "to paint."¹² The discussion of the painting that follows offers another example for how Tieck's novel conceptualizes paintings as texts. Furthermore, reading clearly represents a positive source for painting in the novel. The same idea also comes from Sebastian, who turns to books for artistic inspiration.¹³ As he reports in his letter to Franz: "[i]ch kann nicht malen, und darum lese ich auch wohl jetzt in Büchern fleißiger, als ich sonst tat, und ich lerne manches Neue, und manches, das ich schon wußte, erscheint mir wieder neu" (FSW 125).¹⁴ Painting serves as an interpretive outcome of reading.

¹² This usage of the verb *dichten* is not mentioned in Adelung (Vol. I 1476-77) or Grimms (Vol. II 1057-62).

¹³ As an extensive reader, Sebastian reads one book after the other, until he finds a proper topic for his painting.

¹⁴ He reads for inspiration and plans his art based on his reading: "Vorzüglich gern möchte ich aus Cäsars Geschichte etwas bilden" (FSW 126).

Another connection between the fine arts and literature emerges when literary texts are represented in images. It is not unusual for paintings to combine image with text,¹⁵ and this technique made reading easier.¹⁶ Thus, it should not surprise us that Tieck's novel portrays paintings that include some kind of text or poem: "Ich machte," Dürer says as he describes one of his etchings, "[i] machte also ein zierliches großes Kupferblatt und stach mühsam rundherum meine Verse mit zierlichen Buchstaben ein: es sollte ein moralisches Gedicht vorstellen, und ich unterstund mich, der ganzen Welt darin gute Lehren zu geben" (*FSW* 109). Interestingly, Dürer's etching requires two kinds of reception: seeing and reading. By making an image more complex, a text can complicate and enhance its message, as illustrated by the recurring motif of St. Genevieve in the second half of Tieck's novel. Franz, who knows the story from a previous reading, is charged with the restoration of a painting owned by a cloister that depicts the saint's story. As he attempts to remove some "letters" (*Buchstaben*) from the painting during the restoration, the abbess stops him: "Nein, Herr Maler, Ihr müßt das Bild im ganzen so lassen, wie es ist, und um alles ja die Worte stehenlassen" (*FSW* 354). Here Franz must be reminded that texts are integral to the painting. The abbess's explanation reveals that the work's purpose in the cloister is not to elevate art, but to communicate a message. According to her, such communication is only possible through words: "Dies alles ist mir sehr gleich, aber eine geistliche, bewegliche Historie muß durchaus nicht auf eine ganz weltliche Art ausgedrückt werden [...]. Die Worte sind aber eigentlich die Erklärung des Gemäldes, und diese gottseligen Betrachtungen könnt Ihr nimmermehr durch den Ausdruck der Mienen ersetzen" (*FSW* 354). In

¹⁵ "Lesbare Buchtitel als Sprachelemente auf Malwerken sind in doppelter Hinsicht bemerkenswert. Einmal tragen sie dazu bei, die inhaltliche Bildaussage auf mannigfaltige Weise zu präzisieren, zum anderen sollten diese in so ungewöhnlicher Form überlieferten Buchtitel als literaturgeschichtliche Hinweise—im weiten Rahmen der Kulturgeschichte des Buches—nicht übersehen werden" (Bergmann 256).

¹⁶ "This is the advantage of visual images—they can be read in any direction. Even when alphabetic writing is incorporated into visual images, it need not be confined to a horizontal axis, but may appear scattered at every angle throughout the work. This occurs frequently in Reformation broadsheets" (Scribner 3).

other words, the painting is available for the nuns in the cloister to read intensively. But Franz understands the artist's motive for using text in his painting differently. During his restoration work, therefore, he reads the painting, but his reading is ironic. He recognizes secular themes in the sacred image. Finally, after he feels attracted to one of the nuns, he experiences the painting as a personal message and reminder of his own story: "Das Gemälde schien ihn mit seinen alten Versen anzureden, Genoveva ihm seine Untreue, seinen Wankelmut vorzuwerfen" (FSW 364). Franz reads the painting with his customary strategy: he compares its subject matter with his own situation. Despite the painting's original intent, for him it functions as another text to be read extensively. This situation summarizes the issues at stake in the novel. The discussions of paintings serve as a vehicle for exploring reading behaviors. Here, for example, we find intensive and extensive reading contrasted. But Franz's ironic reading does not simply demonstrate his misunderstanding of the text's original intention. It also shows how content can change meaning. That is to say, by seeing himself in the painting, Tieck's protagonist deprives the painting of its general religious message. The meaning of a text is always personal for Franz, so that the painting, in its restored state, can now enlighten his own situation and help him to focus and move on with the search for his beloved. But unlike Wilhelm reading *Hamlet*, Franz does not look purposely and compulsively for mirror images of himself. As when he felt Genoveva's blame, he is frequently surprised that his readings relate to his personal situation.

Tieck's *Sternbald* uses the overarching topic of the fine arts, especially painting, to analyze reading. Visual and verbal representations of reading specifically connect the novel to the trends in Tieck's time rather than to the historical time of narration. Paintings as artifacts themselves require a kind of reading, and since biblical or literary texts provide sources for pictures, *Sternbald* complicates the relationship that interpretive paintings establish. In the novel,

the images that have their sources in literature turn into textual objects, which, in turn, are described and discussed. Franz's journey to complete his education as a painter therefore, not only provides a framework for discussing the fine arts, it also offers an opportunity to explore the reception of written and orally narrated texts. Although Franz prepares to become a painter, he is involved in reading or listening to stories throughout the novel. Because of his profession, he is inevitably engaged in the reception of images. However, he finds himself even more frequently engaged in the reception of narratives. This surprising shift in the novel from visual to verbal textuality reveals that narrative plays an increasingly important role in Franz's *Bildung* and even overtakes his natural inclination toward images. Lessing's differentiation between the fine arts and literature (poetry) can help us see a difference that applies to Franz:

Bei dem Künstler sind sie [die Götter und geistigen Wesen] personifizierte Abstracta, die beständig die ähnliche Charakterisierung behalten müssen, wenn sie erkenntlich sein sollen. Bei dem Dichter hingegen sind sie wirkliche handelnde Wesen, die über ihren allgemeinen Charakter noch andere Eigenschaften und Affecten haben, welche nach Gelegenheit der Umstände vor jenen vorstechen können. (*Laokoon* 81)

As we shall see, stories, songs, and poems play a crucial role in Franz's identity formation. His education as a reader becomes just as important as his education as a painter during his journey. In fact, in order to become a painter, Franz must first become a reader and listener. Applying Lessing's differentiation between the fine arts and literature to Tieck's novel, I argue that Franz's reading helps him to develop his own life-story, that is, the story of his journey. According to Lessing, literature shuns the abstract in order to present the particular. As Franz reads, he confronts active subjects ("handelnde Wesen") with whom he can identify. Images, however, present abstract ideas, and thus he does not find the same support in either visual reception or the act of painting. But he can learn to relate specific actions to characters in verbal texts. Recognizing himself in the *Handlungen* of narratives, he finds encouragement to continue his

journey and search for his love. Hence it is imperative to investigate Franz's reading behavior and the reading environment in the novel.

3.2 READING AND LISTENING

In contrast to the *Lehrjahre*, Tieck's novel creates a reading environment in which intensive reading, although occasionally practiced, is no longer preferred. Extensive reading—the common mode at the end of the eighteenth century—has overtaken it. However, the historical framework of Franz's journey is not set in Tieck's own time, but in the late Middle Ages.¹⁷ Specifically, Tieck uses this framework to comment on contemporary reading practices by assigning to extensive reading features of traditional orality. Reinventing orality, along with its crucial social component, suggests a new way to connect extensive readers within a community. Similarly, other related reading issues of Tieck's own day are disguised within the historical setting, despite his novel's apparent disinterest in contemporary trends:

Tieck nennt seinen Roman eine 'altdeutsche Geschichte', und er sorgt für Lokal- und Zeitkolorit, indem er Albrecht Dürer und Lukas van Leyden, die Städte Nürnberg und Antwerpen sowie das Straßburger Münster auftreten läßt. Doch was er im historischen Kostüm vorführt, sind die Probleme der europäischen Bewusstseinskrise um 1800. (Hofmann 54)

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, when visuality had become problematic, according to Gaier, figuration (*Bildlichkeit*) reached a crisis: "Erscheinen diese Instanzen [Vorstellung, Bild, Denkbild] zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts noch als gesichert und die Beziehungen zu ihnen noch

¹⁷ Pikulik specifies the exact year of the plot: "Der Roman spielt in den Jahren 1520/21 in Deutschland, den Niederlanden und Italien" (288), whereas Erwin Neumann emphasizes the German Reformation and the European Renaissance: "Franz Sternbald, nach dem Willen des jungen Tieck als Kunstschüler Dürers in das deutsche Reformationszeitalter und in die europäische Renaissance zurückversetzt (also in deutsche und europäische Vergangenheitsgeschichte)" ("Frühromantische Künstlerroman" 63).

verhältnismäßig unproblematisch, so haben sich am Ende des Jahrhunderts die Verhältnisse radikal verändert” (“Denken als” 20). How art should be understood was also changing, moreover, and Lessing’s *Laokoon* had already reacted to a crisis within reading (*Lesen*) and seeing (*Sehen*). As Rothe reminds us, Lessing was alarmed that texts and images would become inaccessible, because people would no longer be able to recognize what was presented to them, leading to their alienation from the arts (18). However, as Eckel claims, the contemporary complaint in Romantic circles about the loss of reliable images actually led to new possibilities for literature (Eckel 214-5). Tieck’s novel, I argue, joins this discussion by criticizing the privilege of sight as the most reliable sense in cognition. According to this view, the object of reference had become invisible to cognition: “Das Referenzobjekt ist unsichtbar geworden, der Erkenntnis entzogen; mithin ist die Beziehung zur Realität nicht mehr überprüfbar” (Gaier 20-21). Gaier’s summary, of course, echoes Lessing’s differentiation of painting from poetry: “bei ihr ist alles sichtbar” (102), whereas in poetry invisibility activates the imagination (“diese Unsichtbarkeit erlaubt der Einbildungskraft die Scene zu erweitern”) (103). Franz Sternbald’s involvement with both art forms reveals a new kind of relationship between the fine arts and literature. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, according to Gaier, *Bildlichkeit* (figuration) transformed literature: “Dichtung läßt [...] durch ihren abbildenden Modellcharakter die Anwendbarkeit von Ideen auf den Stoff der Erfahrung anschaulich werden, und sie erhebt durch ihr fiktionales Spiel den Rezipienten zum Gefühl seiner Freiheit, Autonomie und Schöpferkraft” (41). Tieck’s novel investigates this transformative moment through Franz’s shift from images to words. By exploring his novel’s historical setting, he can undertake a broad exploration of the prospects for reading in his own time.

Tieck's choice of the Protestant Reformation and his early insertion of Luther into his narrative are important, because the historical moment and the figure witnessed significant changes in the history of reading.¹⁸ Voßkamp emphasizes the usefulness of this kind of device in general terms: “[die] Wahl eines historischen Zeitkolorits [...] [kann] für die Entwicklung der europäischen Kunstgeschichte als paradigmatisch angesehen werden” (Voßkamp, *‘Ein anderes Selbst’* 56-57). In this context, two events in the sixteenth century promoted the emergence of a new reading public similar to the technological advances that would transform and broaden the reading public in the second half of the eighteenth century. Gutenberg's invention of mechanical printing made the primary goal of the Reformation, which was to make the Bible accessible to people in their native tongues, technologically possible, and by the time of the Reformation, the advent of print had caused a shift from scribal to typographical culture (Eisenstein 2). Consequently, books played a key role in the spread of ideas (Febvre, Martin 287-8). Secondly, Luther popularized serious works by developing in a simple language that could be understood by both the uneducated and the learned (Holborn 127-8). Thus, the book-buying market shifted from churches and schools to attract readers outside official institutions, who then began to read Scripture for themselves (Holborn 134). Engelsing follows this development into the eighteenth century, when the actual shift from intensive to extensive reading actually happened, and highlights the effect that institutions had on people's private reading even prior to the shift: “Es

¹⁸ “Und ist es denn auch nicht in unserem Zeitalter überaus schön, für alle Freunde des großen Mannes, des kühnen Streikers, den wackern Doktor Luther trefflich zu konterfeien und dadurch die Liebe der Menschen und ihre Bewunderung zu erhöhen?” (FSW 24). Although the ideas of the Reformation do not play a particular role in Tieck's novel, Martin Luther's name comes up in various conversations throughout the novel. e.g. in one of Sebastian's letter to Franz: “Ich habe einen Nürnberger, H a n s S a c h s, kennegelernt, [...] dabei ist er ein großer Freund der Reformation, er hat viel herrliche Gedichte darüber abgefaßt” (FSW 130), or in a short argument between Franz and some Italian characters about Luther's achievements: “Er [Roderigo] kam durch einen Zufall auf Luthern und die Reformation zu sprechen” When Ludoviko criticizes Luther and the Reformation, Sternbald feels offended: “‘Ihr erstaunt mich!’ sagte Franz. [...] ‘Oh, Martin Luther!’ seufzte Franz, ‘Ihr habt da ein kühnes Wort über ihn gesprochen’” (FSW 318-19).

ist keine neue These, daß es im protestantischen Bereich vor allem die Pfarrer selbst waren, die ihre Anhänger lehrten, sich von der intensiven auf die extensive Lektüre umzustellen" (*Zur Sozialgeschichte* 139). These developments first resulted in a loss of control over how books should be read, but they also inevitably educated a new readership. Thus, the Reformation became a key period in the history of the book and reading (Moeller 30). Many of its texts, which Scribner calls printed propaganda, documented new religious ideas and were available as soon as they were written (1). The increased publication of religious and moral texts in translation, moreover, promoted book-buying and a book-reading public. And while the process was certainly complicated, one of its consequences was the emergence of mass literature (*Massenliteratur*). For the first time in history, books were printed in large quantities and affected a large number of readers (*Lesermassen*) (Moeller 30-1), with two-centuries' growth in printing and in reading resulting in the emergence of new literary genres. Scribner illustrates the close relationship between the Reformation and literary developments: "[T]he Reformation produced a religion of literate bible-reading laymen, and Luther made such an important contribution to German literature" (2). These developments prepared and foreshadowed the drastic changes over the eighteenth century, when similarly rapid and revolutionary changes also redefined reading. By the end of that century, readers with an insatiable hunger for books (*Lesewut*) turned increasingly toward secular topics, and silent and solitary modes of reading supplanted oral and communal reading.

As I have indicated, Tieck's portrayal of Franz Sternbald as a reader unites features from both time periods. Although his reading is still situated within the oral tradition, the new developments just outlined are also at work in Tieck's novel, as indicated by the variety of scenes that analyze the new readership of Reformation. Although we never see Franz reading the

Bible, his master, Albrecht Dürer, describes him as a regular reader of Scripture: “[W]eil Du große Gedanken hegst und mit warmer, brünstiger Seele die Bibel liesest und die heiligen Geschichten, so wirst Du auch gewißlich ein guter Maler werden, und ich werde noch einst stolz auf Dich sein” (FSW 60). Since it is Dürer who makes the connection between reading Scripture and becoming a good artist, reading the Bible seems crucial in the education of a painter. This prompts Franz to pass on the Master’s teaching to his friend, Sebastian, in response to which Sebastian considers the positive effect that repeated scriptural readings have on him: “Ich lese viel, wie Du mich sonst oft dazu ermahntest, in der Heiligen Schrift, und je mehr ich darin lese, je teurer wird mir alles darin” (FSW 128). Both passages recall the practice of intensive reading by demonstrating the importance of reading the *Holy Bible* regularly both in professional and private life. Nonetheless, as Gilmont and Schön point out, that people had started to read the Bible for themselves and outside of church, did not mean the disappearance of oral culture (which effectively occurred two hundred years later, during Tieck’s lifetime) but its transformation. In fact, reading aloud in private communities began to increase:

In the sixteenth century what was new about the book was its proliferation in a world where relationships were still essentially oral. Information circulated by oral and auditory channels: rumor, which fed debate, both public and private; the proclamations of public criers and the calls and come-ons of pedlars; sermons; drama, comic or polemical; letters; street songs and public reading. There were images, spectacles and processions to catch the eye. We need to distance ourselves from the twentieth century and remember that orality was omnipresent. [...] The most plausible hypothesis is that reading practices continued to overlap. Silent reading, in which contact between a text and its reader takes place in privacy, was certainly practiced, but other means of access to writing accompanied it: murmured individual reading, shared reading aloud in a small group, and collective reading of a liturgical nature, where at certain times the minister reads for everyone and at other times each worshipper follows the text in his prayer book as the community sings. (Gilmont 224-5)¹⁹

¹⁹ “Trotz eines erheblichen Anteils Lesefähiger war bei der Vermittlung der reformatorischen Ideen das Lesen der Schriften eingebunden in einen zu weiten Teilen mündlichen Kommunikationsprozeß, der die verschiedensten

Furthermore, as Ong emphasizes, during this time “a sense of the complex relationships of writing and speech grew stronger” (10). In this context, *Sternbald* presents a wide variety of public and private modes of communication that require reading or listening, and these, in turn, correspond to trends at the end of the eighteenth century, albeit against the backdrop of the Protestant Reformation. Significantly, because the oral tradition was still dominant during the sixteenth century, it figures crucially in the configuration of reading in Tieck’s novel. However, the novel does not simply depict the oral tradition of its age. The overlapping reading practices that Gilmont assigns to the Reformation also provide a connection to Tieck’s own day, and his novel capitalizes on the ubiquitous presence of orality to demonstrate its benefits for communication.

In *Sternbald*, we find dissatisfaction with the contemporary practices that alienated readers from communal experience and the orality of reading.²⁰ However, the novel does not nostalgically express simple longing for an antiquated and irrelevant mode of reading. Rather, it examines a dynamic historical process by investigating the relationship between reading and listening and the process of their separation.²¹ Along with his emphasis on communal reading and the oral tradition, moreover, Tieck addresses issues of his own time regarding reading

Formen annehmen konnte: Vorlesen, gemeinsames Lesen, mündliche Weitergabe des Gelesenen vom persönlichen Gespräch über die kleine Gruppe bis zur Predigt, Diskussionen” (Schön, “Geschichte des Lesens” 18).

²⁰ This argument is juxtaposed, however, with Tieck’s own career as a professional writer. Tieck could profit from the advances in book production and its consequences regarding the changes in readerly behavior (Kontje, *Private Lives* 79-83).

²¹ Schön describes the High Middle Ages (*Hochmittelalter*) as a time when people did not differentiate between reading and listening: “Aber entscheidend ist wohl, daß die Menschen jener Zeit vielleicht die kategoriale Differenz gar nicht in der Weise sahen zwischen ‘lesend hören’ und ‘ hoeren lesen,’ zwischen dem—lauten—‘Lesen’ und dem Zuhören beim Lesen eines anderen (‘we et lese edde sitte darbi’), wie wir dies entsprechender heutiger Praxis tun” (*Der Verlust* 34).

behaviors. Thus, Franz's reading becomes extensive,²² as he often finds for a similar experience (recognizing himself in the text) in different stories. This behavior recalls the *Lesewut* (reading mania) of the end of the eighteenth century. Although Franz expects to find familiar personal experiences when reading biographies and autobiographies, the variety of the stories, poems, and songs that he consumes provides him with new contexts every time, which in turn allows him to reflect on his life. This presentation of reading as a personal and secular experience illustrates the novel's engagement with Tieck's own age. So, too, does the fact that the biographies in the novel often feature characteristics of pulp fiction, which arose in the eighteenth century as a result of the technological changes in book production²³. The many interruptions in a story told by Roderigo, for example, feature delay—as a device of pulp fiction—to create suspense.²⁴ Likewise Franz's encounter with the old hermit is preceded by stories that build up his expectations: "Schon seit langer Zeit hatte er viel von einem wunderbaren Menschen sprechen hören [...] Man erzählte so viel wunderbares von diesem Manne" (*FSW* 247). These anticipations precede Franz's visit to the hermit, which itself turns into a storytelling occasion with Franz as listener. Another similarity with popular literature is the surprising turn of events and intertwined relationships that we find in the stories of the countess and the recluse (*FSW* 289), as well as in Rudolf's story on the ship.²⁵ The latter, moreover, offers a discussion of reading strategies, as well as an exploration of the oral tradition and storytelling, and an

²² It is interesting to note Kontje's comment on Tieck's relationship to reading, as he was "corrupted at an early age by excessive and indiscriminate reading" (*Private Lives* 79). The countless reading occasions in the novel recall Tieck's personal experience.

²³ "Der Prozeß [die Trivialisierung oder Vermassung der Literatur] verdankt seine Entstehung nicht so sehr einem inneren als vielmehr einem äußeren Grund: der sich ausbreitenden Kenntnis der Schrift in breiten Volksschichten" (Schulte-Sasse, *Die Kritik an der Trivilliteratur* 48).

²⁴ With the emergence of periodicals, popular literature became accessible on a serially printed subscription basis.

²⁵ With reference to Rudolf's story, Anger comments on the novel's close relationship to pulp fiction in the *Studienausgabe* and claims, "Die Suche nach der geliebten Unbekannten, deren Bildnis man gesehen oder gefunden hatte, ist ein altes Romanmotiv, das im 18. Jh. besonders im Feenmärchen und später im Trivialroman verbreitet war" (*FSW* 145).

investigation of pulp fiction.²⁶ The story shares many traits with popular literature: it serves primarily as entertainment and aims to satisfy the taste of a broad audience, as it is told in simple language, is easy to understand, and meets the expectations of readers. Furthermore, it implies a special relationship between the author (presenter) of the story and the audience, insofar as the author reacts and is willing to fulfill the wishes of the readers (listeners). Their sentiment also foreshadows the second half of the novel, when Franz comes to the bitter conclusion that an artist must produce artifacts that please the crowd if he wants to be popular (*FSW* 337).²⁷ Franz's realization, however, is juxtaposed to Till Eulenspiegel's work, which appears in the novel through a painting. As Schöttker argues, Lukas's discussion of Eulenspiegel's achievements serves as a positive re-evaluation of thirteenth-century popular literature (168). Pulp fiction promotes extensive reading, because its readers are expected to consume as many books as possible without assuming that the same book will ever be read again.²⁸ In this sense, Tieck's novel can be seen as a plea for reading with an emphasis on consumption, regardless of a text's content.

3.2.1 Intensive Reading

Although intensive reading would be the dominant mode at the time of the Reformation, there are only a handful of descriptions in Tieck's novel that portray it. One of these occurs shortly

²⁶ The novel itself has been compared to popular literature: "The plot moves on two levels: the hero's passage through trivial adventures (he is looking for his beloved's portrait, for example), and his inward journey fed by premonitions that turn into reality because apparent coincidences correspond with the subconscious" (Gerhart Hoffmeister 91). "Das Motiv der ungewissen familiären Herkunft ist möglicherweise der Trivialliteratur der Zeit entlehnt" (Thomas Schmidt 75).

²⁷ Compare to "Wer sich entschloß, als Schriftsteller auf alle Nebentätigkeiten zu verzichten, konnte ein materiell gesichertes Leben in der Regel nur führen, wenn er sich dem Geschmack möglichst vieler Leser anpaßte und Bücher schrieb, die von vielen gekauft wurden" (Nusser 28).

²⁸ "Gemeint ist der Übergang vom intensiven zum extensiven, ohne den vor allem die Ausbreitung trivialer Lesestoffe gar nicht denkbar wäre" (Nusser 25).

after the protagonist's departure from Nürnberg, when Franz spends the night with a farmer's family:

Als es finster geworden war, vermehrte ein eisgrauer Nachbar die Gesellschaft, um den sich besonders die Kinder herumdrängten und verlangten, daß er ihnen wieder eine Geschichte erzählen sollte, die Alten mischten sich auch darunter und baten, daß er wieder von heiligen Märtyrern vorsagen möchte, nichts Neues, sondern was er ihnen schon oft erzählt habe, je öfter sie es hörten, je lieber würde es ihnen. Der Nachbar war auch willig und trug die Geschichte der heiligen Genoveva vor, dann des heiligen Laurentius und alle waren in tiefer Andacht verloren. Franz war überaus gerührt. (*FSW* 30)

In this scene we can see the power of storytelling, aligned with the repetition of biblical and religious stories, which were the typical subject matter of intensive reading. Here the listener-readers are uneducated farmers, and the ritual act of reading unites people of different ages. Both children and adults wish to hear the well-known story. The scene also reflects the spirit of the Reformation. Luther's idea of good reading, explains Gilmont, "is a good book frequently read, no matter how small it is. That makes a man learned in the Scriptures and godly" (219). The situation further suggests that there is no need for either book or print-literacy. The storyteller does not rely on a printed text, because he has told the story over and over and knows it now by heart. As Kontje observes, the scene could be a prototype of intensive reading or storytelling, providing both entertainment and religious lessons for the family. In fact, it has novelty only for Franz, who remains an outsider (*Private Lives* 83) and whose presence actually complicates the simplistic portrayal of intensive reading. Although Franz experiences this kind of reading as an outsider, however, he does not remain unaffected by it. As he reveals in an admiring letter composed that very night, he has learned a great deal: "Ich wenigstens habe aus diesen Erzählungen vieles gelernt" (*FSW* 33). Importantly, moreover, while the scene portrays intensive reading, it will stand as a one-time experience for Franz that initiates a series of extensive readings. Thus, later in the novel, St. Genevieve appears again in another scene of intensive

reading in the cloister that Franz has been assigned to restore. But the painting of the saint, which should convey a religious message through intensive reading, again represents for Franz an obsolete paradigm (“Das Bild schien alt, er konnte nicht das Zeichen eines bekannten Künstlers entdecken”) (*FSW* 353). The fact that Tieck’s protagonist twice turns a reading situation intended to be intensive into extensive reading reinforces the conclusion that intensive reading has become historical for him.

Other scenes in the novel also recall intensive reading, including the rereading of letters, characters reading religious songs to each other, or a memory of reading old books. However, such scenes remain only gestures suggesting that the advent, availability, and presence of print had changed the nature of reading forever. In fact, characters other than Franz, such as Sebastian, also experience reading similarly: “ich lese jetzt Deine Briefe zu wiederholten Malen, und mich dünkt, als wenn ich sie nun besser verstünde” (*FSW* 125). And while the mechanism of reading here corresponds with the intensive mode, the text also suggests that important changes have occurred in the history of reading. The subject matter is now personal, not religious, for example, so that intensive reading can comfort by connecting the protagonist to his childhood: “Er kehrte zurück, als es Abend war, und las seiner Pflegemutter einige fromme Gesänge aus einem alten Buche vor, das er in seiner Kindheit sehr geliebt hatte” (*FSW* 68). Although the situation is reversed—Franz now reads to his mother—it still maintains the religious subject matter of intensive reading: “Die frommen Gedanken und Ahnungen redeten ihn wieder an wie damals” (*FSW* 68). Nevertheless, while Franz shows a tendency to reproduce intensive reading, the occasions are rare and serve largely as reminders of a mode of reading that belongs to the past. Whenever intensive reading takes place, the novel emphasizes its association with history and thus creates distance to it. Thus, Sternbald’s first letter from Dürer also evokes the experience of

the “old fashioned” intensive reading: “Wie wenn man oft alte, längst vergessene Bücher wieder aufschlägt und in ihnen Belehrungen oder unerwarteten Trost im Leiden antrifft, so kamen vergangene Zeiten mit ihren Gedanken in Franzens Seele zurück” (*FSW* 61). Here the evocation of days past makes the gap between the two types of reading obvious. Intensive reading has become nostalgic for Franz. He fondly remembers the comfort he once found in a well-known and often-read book—the same experience that an intensive reader would have reading the *Holy Bible* or other sacred stories. However, this feeling cannot be sustained, nor does it prompt Franz to pursue intensive reading again. Instead, he finishes reading Dürer’s letter and moves on to another text. In fact, his preferred mode of reading is extensive. Tieck’s novel, unlike Goethe’s, does not investigate the transition from intensive to extensive reading. Instead it shows that the transition has already taken place. Although intensive reading has not completely disappeared and occurs sporadically, it simply offers a contrast to the ubiquitous presence of extensive reading. By placing an extensive reader like Franz in a setting where the oral tradition was still dominant, however, Tieck’s novel can reflect on the capacity of extensive reading to redeploy certain features of its increasingly less viable predecessor.

3.2.2 Oral Culture in Tieck’s Sixteenth Century

The historical framework of the Reformation allows Tieck’s protagonist to participate in a diversity of reading situations: more often than not, Franz listens to performed songs or orally narrated stories rather than read printed texts. I will therefore now turn to the significance of orality for Tieck’s investigation of reading. By looking at the construction of orality in *Sternbald* in terms of the history of reading, I propose to examine the relationship between reading and *Bildung*. Schön argues that the shift to silent reading, which was more or less complete by the

end of the eighteenth century, played just as important a role in the history of reading as the move from intensive to extensive reading (*Der Verlust* 109). Although the oral culture that Tieck depicts as Franz's communicative and educational environment figures importantly in the novel, it does not neatly correspond to the oral tradition of any specific period. In fact, the novel creates its own oral culture that is informed and influenced by the print culture of its day represented in new and subtle ways. As a synthesis of oral and print culture, then, what *Sternbald* finally offers, is similar to Ong's idea of a "secondary orality." During the twentieth century, Ong suggests, there was a technological revival of oral culture that maintained some characteristics of primary orality, but differed from it as well. Secondary orality, he explains, emphasizes a strong group sense and the need to pay attention once again to the spoken word. It is

both remarkably like and remarkably unlike primary orality. Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture [...] Thus in a sense orality has come into its own more than ever before. But it is not the old orality. The old-style oratory coming from primary orality is gone forever. (136-37)

For Ong, this orality is only complementary to print culture and can no longer assume a primary role. Tieck's novel likewise identifies the need to conserve certain values from oral culture that were vanishing over the course of the eighteenth century.

In *Sternbald* the oral tradition remains the primary means of Franz's education as a reader. Although written texts, such as books and private correspondence also appear, orality dominates the novel. Poems, biographies, stories, and discussions about art provide a variety of situations for reading. Before I investigate the novel's representation of the oral tradition at length, I should further differentiate between oral and print culture. As Ingrid Oesterle emphasizes, "[d]ie Oralität des Erzählens mit ihrer variantenreichen Offenheit sperrt sich gegen

die Schriftlichkeit der Literatur mit ihren Festschreibungen” (167). That is to say, there is an inherent tension between the oral and written traditions, as Neumann further explains: “Erzählen—das ist freilich noch etwas anderes als Schreiben. Schriftlichkeit und Mündlichkeit erscheinen als jene konkurrierenden Dispositive, die im Spiel der Memoria der europäischen Kultur ihre Wirkung entfalten” (Gerhard Neumann, “Romantisches Erzählen” 10). This tension between the two traditions, however, is only partially related to the different media and reflects a larger competition between two distinct cultures. According to Ingrid Oesterle, Romantic literature was defined by this opposition:

Das mündliche Erzählen hingegen ist vom Verschwinden bedroht; es gehört tendentiell der Vergangenheit an. Das ist eine jeglicher romantischen Erzählkunst vorgängige Erkenntnis; die Märchen rettet die Verschriftlichung, nicht das Forterzählen. Romantisches Erzählen ist daher ein sich seiner Literarizität, seines Schriftcharakters in hohem Maße selbst bewußtes Erzählen. (167-68)

Whereas the oral storytelling tradition was endangered the Romantic fairy tale—a genre deeply embedded in print culture— ironically saved the oral tradition by archiving it in print. This makes Romantic literature highly self-conscious. Since the Reformation witnessed the emergence of print culture, as Scribner argues, as an addition to and not a replacement of orality (2), it can serve as an ideal background for the exploration of the relationship between the two cultures. In this light, Tieck’s novel paradoxically seeks to preserve certain aspects of oral culture through the medium of the printed word. Ironically, his pleas for orality in *Sternbald* were meant to reach his audience in print.

The fact that poems and songs are interwoven with the narrative of Franz’s journey is, therefore, significant, because one of the most important genres in the oral tradition was the song. Even as print culture spread and silent reading became dominant, poetry maintained its orality. In most poems, language is constructed for live delivery, and its acoustic manifestation

contributes to the aesthetic experience. Thus poetry contributes to the preservation of orality, which often occurs in connection with music.²⁹ The connection between poetry and music found a new definition during the Romantic period.³⁰ Romantic literature, asserts Eckel, established a close connection to music. Poetry undermines the status of visibility in literature: “Im Namen der Musik tritt die Poesie an zu einer *Problematisierung literarischer Bildlichkeit*, im Namen der Musik erprobt sie *Möglichkeiten einer neuen reflexiven Schreibweise*” (215). The common goal of literature and music to question *Bildlichkeit* transforms literary writing. In the case of Tieck’s novel, music enhances poetry, which, paradoxically, is embedded in the narrative of a novel about art. Like images, music is also turned into a textual object in the novel. The acoustic essence of music, which is a crucial aspect of the oral tradition, is lost in print. Only descriptions can indicate in the printed text when singing takes place. Singing in this analysis, however, represents a form of reading, i.e. consumption of texts, and I will forgo discussing its connection to music in detail. As Franz and other characters engage in everything from storytelling to singing, we can see in Tieck’s novel a clear preference for vocalized reading. Indeed, the overwhelming number of songs and recited poems in the novel makes reading it an acoustic experience. The poems and their acoustic effects create tension with the form of the novel, because readers must reflect on their own reading as they switch reading strategies between the

²⁹ Music, according to Ong, “may act as a constraint to fix a verbatim oral narrative” (63). In addition, Schön quotes from a seventeenth century Jesuit father, Francesco Sacchini, whose work described the close relationship between reading, reading aloud, and singing. Answering the question of whether it is better to read aloud or silently, Francesco Sacchini said: “Ich bin der Meinung, daß man vorzüglich die Dichter laut, und gleichsam singend lesen müsse. [...] [D]enn es ist Gesang, und die Dichter sagen es selbst, daß sie sängen; aber eben so wenig flüchtig, wie das Lied. [...] Lautes Lesen ermuntert überdieß noch die Seele des Lesers, und bringt leichter die nämlichen Empfindungen in ihr hervor, die im Gedichte herrschen” (*Der Verlust* 99).

³⁰ Compare to Herder’s description of the role of the ear in cultural self-definition in *Die kritische Wälder zur Ästhetik* (1771): “Das Gehör allein, ist der innigste, der Tiefste der Sinne. Nicht so deutlich, wie das Auge ist es auch nicht so kalt: nicht so gründlich wie das Gefühl ist es auch nicht so grob; aber es ist so der Empfindung am nächsten, wie das Auge den Ideen und das Gefühl der Einbildungskraft. Die Natur selbst hat diese Nahheit bestätigt, da sie keinen Weg zur Seele besser wußte, als durch Ohr und—Sprache” (357).

narrative and the poems and songs that interrupt it. These poems and songs are constructed as means of reflection: the poems often relate to events in the plot, and so they offer an occasion for the reader to summarize what has happened and reflect on it. Because the poems and songs appear in their print form in the novel, however, they visually disrupt the flow of the narrative. But it is clear from the context that the characters recite and sing them. While Franz certainly consumes texts as a listener, he also often writes and sings poems. The first time this occurs is when he says goodbye to his friend Sebastian after leaving Nürnberg and requests him to sing a poem: “Ach! laß uns hier einen Augenblick stillstehen, horch, wie schön die Gebüsch flüstern; wenn du mir gut bist, so singe mir hier noch einmal das altdeutsche Lied vom Reisen. [...] Franz hatte sich ins hohe Gras gesetzt und sang die letzten Verse inbrünstig mit” (*FSW* 17-18). This situation is paradigmatic in for the novel. Because singing always takes place in nature, songs provide a kind of unspoiled, natural, and spontaneous learning.³¹ Characters know the songs by heart, or they compose them on the spot. There is no need for objects such as books. However, this scene is also idyllic. It would not be possible in Tieck’s time. Throughout Franz’s journey, reading covers a wide range of situations, from reading in solitude to communal storytelling, but the occasions of reading stories or singing poems are almost always communal.

After Franz meets his traveling companion Rudolf Florestan, an Italian poet, on his way through Europe, the number of embedded texts, such as poems, songs, and stories, increases.³² Blackall argues that because the stories within the novel depict a young man searching for and finding his beloved, they also mirror Franz’s ambitions and encourage him to continue his journey (162). I am arguing that these embedded texts also play an important role in the novel’s

³¹ This treatment of the songs is not just paradigmatic within the novel, but also paradigmatic of Romantic arguments about creativity: It is spontaneous and springs from nature.

³² “[W]ith the advent of Florestan, poems become a constantly recurrent feature. [...] As the journey proceeds conversations multiply and poems proliferate” (Blackall 162-63).

analysis of orality and Franz's education as a reader. Hence, we need to examine them in detail. Immediately after meeting Rudolf, Franz joins his new friend in singing. Afterwards, they discuss the songs: "Das Lied gefällt mir sehr," Franz remarks, "denn es führt eine gewisse kindliche Sprache, und mir ist oft beim Klang einer Schalmey dergleichen in den Sinn gekommen" (FSW 164).³³ Because song, an oral form, occurs largely in a public place in the company of other characters, it highlights the benefits for the community that singing creates. Frequently, a discussion immediately follows a song, which together with poems, foster communication and the exchange of ideas. *Sternbald* values these features as unambiguous benefits of the oral tradition. Whereas a person reading a book sends clear signals that he wishes to be left alone, singing in public invites others to this activity. Tieck's novel develops this idea in a scene where the characters engage in a singing competition and explores additional aspects of the kind of communication promoted by communal singing: "Unter der berauschten Gesellschaft entstand ein Gemurmeln, weil sie stritten, welcher von den beiden Poeten den Preis verdiene" (FSW 229). The competition foregrounds different reading behaviors, as Florestan receives a critique from the audience: "Man weiß nicht recht, was der junge Mensch mit seinem Gesange oder Liede will" (FSW 229). In reaction to this comment, Rudolf questions the interpretative abilities of the company, which is tipsy. However, the criticism does not come only

³³ This pattern is repeated throughout the novel: "Sternbald und Florestan hatten jetzt schon die Tore der Stadt weit hinter sich, sie hörten die Glocken aus der Ferne schlagen, und Rudolf sang mit lauter Stimme" (FSW 189). "Sie gingen, indem Rudolf fröhliche Geschichten erzählte, durch die schöne Gegend" (FSW 199), "dann erzählten sie unverhohlen von ihrer Wanderschaft" (FSW 224), "Ich habe dir einigemal von den seltsamen Arten der spanischen Poesie gesprochen, getraust du dir nun mit mir ein solches Wechsellied zu singen, wie ich es dir beschrieben habe?" (FSW 237), "Rudolf erzählte ihm mit kurzen Worten die Geschichte seiner Wanderschaft" (FSW 267), "'Oh, das ist eine Geschichte,' antwortete jener [Florestan], 'die ich dir schon lange einmal habe erzählen wollen'" (FSW 272), "Nun, wie haben dir die neulichen Lieder gefallen? [fragte Florestan]" (FSW 275), "Sie setzten sich auf den Rasen nieder, und Florestan fragte: 'Welcher Inhalt soll denn in meinem Liede sein?' [...] Rudolf sang diese tollen Verse mit so lächerlichen Bewegungen, daß sich keiner des Lachens enthalten konnte" (FSW 316-18), "'So gut wie ich kann, will ich Euch dienen,' sagte Rudolf, 'mir fällt soeben ein L i e d v o n d e r S e h n s u c h t ein, das Euch vielleicht gefallen wird'" (FSW 327), "'Ich kenne diese Melodie, ich kenne diese Worte,' sagte Sternbald, 'und wenn ich mich recht erinnere - -'" (FSW 331), "Franz war von der wundervollen Versammlung, von den Blumen, den schönen Mädchen, Musik und Wein begeistert, er stand auf und sang" (FSW 380).

from within the company. Even Franz criticizes the song for not having an ending. Rudolf then provokes his friend, “Und warum muß denn alles eben einen Schluß haben?” (*FSW* 230) and questions the group’s narrow-minded readerly behavior: “Ihr werdet aber damit noch viel weniger zufrieden sein” (*FSW* 231). Rudolf’s remarks can be seen as a critique of writers who would compromise their artistic identity by accommodating it to an audience’s taste. At the same time, his position can be seen as an argument against closure, which the Romantic literature of the time also offered. Nonetheless, Rudolf’s provocation outrages the company: “‘Das ist nun gar gottlos!’ riefen viele von den Zuhörern, ‘Euer Schluß ist das Unerlaubteste von allem, was Ihr uns vorgesungen habt.’ Der Streit über den Wert der beiden Dichter fing von neuem an” (*FSW* 232). In reaction to the criticism, he defends the authority of literature: “Laß doch der unschuldigen Poesie ihren Gang” (*FSW* 235). The discussion seems more important than reaching a conclusion. Immediate feedback from colleagues and the audience can lead to a creative conversation that orality encourages. The scene thus emphasizes the importance and the pitfalls of communication and exchange in literary production and reception.

Franz Sternbald finds an important partner for singing songs in Rudolf. But he also encounters other characters with whom he can share songs and have discussions: “Wir wollen sprechen, Lieder singen und schlafen, so gut es sich tun läßt” Bolz, a young fellow joining the protagonist for a while, suggests with great enthusiasm to Franz, who replies with similar enthusiasm: “Da wir nichts Besseres zu tun wissen, will ich Euch ein Lied von der Einsamkeit singen, es schickt sich gut zu unserem Zustande” (*FSW* 343). Other situations in which other characters sing can provide further insight into Tieck’s understanding of reading. For example, Franz meets a lively group of artists in Italy, whose dinner discussion turns into a singing performance: “Mit jeder Minute ward das Gespräch munterer. Man schlug einen Gesang vor, die

sanftern Instrumente sollten ihn begleiten, und Lenore und Laura rezitierten ein damals bekanntes Wechselliedchen” (FSW 383). After the song, the narrator describes the performance and its reception in great detail: “Die Mädchen sangen diesen lebhaften Wettgesang mit einer unaussprechlichen Anmut, jede Bewegung ihrer Mienen, jedes Winken ihrer Augen war lüstern und verführerisch: die ganze Tafel klatschte, als sie geendigt hatten” (FSW 385). The scene demonstrates that the oral tradition encourages direct communication and constant exchanges between author, performer, and audience. Even the genre (*Wechselliedchen* and *Wettgesang*) (“antiphonal song and competitive singing”) invites and facilitates communication. This kind of exchange promotes reading through the active engagement with and consumption of audible texts.

The novel’s emphasis on poems and songs is also noteworthy in the context of the emergence of print culture. The reception of poems was still largely an acoustic experience during Tieck’s day.³⁴ However, by the second half of the century, there was also a tendency to silence poetry and to make the acoustic experience disappear. Men of letters, therefore, made an effort to perpetuate poetry recitations, which required lonely silent readers to modify their reading habits.³⁵ Nevertheless, this programmatic endeavor further emphasized the tension between oral and print culture: “Das poetologische Programm der Wiederherstellung von Mündlichkeit, das neben Klopstock etwa auch von Gottfried August Bürger, den Göttinger Haindichtern und Johann Gottfried Herder vertreten wurde, befindet sich in einem Spannungsverhältnis zur schriftkulturell geprägten Textproduktion dieser Autoren” (Johann

³⁴ As Johann Nikolaus Schneider explains, “[e]ntgegen dem heutigen literaturwissenschaftlichen Usus, Gedichte aller Epochen als Lesetexte zu interpretieren, sind Vortrag, Mündlichkeit, Sprachklang und Sprachrhythmus noch im späten 18. Jahrhundert Leitkategorien für den Umgang mit Gedichten” (137).

³⁵ “Zum einen finden sich Quellen, in denen das laute Vorlesen in Gemeinschaft und das Hören zum poetologischen Programm erklärt werden: Lyrik sei, so wird konstatiert, essentiell an ihre akustische Realisation gebunden, auf dem Papier bzw. beim Lesen könne nur eine Schwundstufe der Gattung transportiert werden” (Johann Nikolaus Schneider 137).

Nikolaus Schneider 148). Based on his novel, Tieck's position on the restoration of oral culture is similar to Klopstock's or Herder's. Furthermore, while the early modern setting allows for an uncomplicated argument in favor of the restoration of oral culture that corresponds to the argument of Tieck's contemporaries, *Sternbald* indicates that the question of restored orality is more complicated. The novel shows that print culture had changed the relationship to literary consumption and reading behavior to the extent that a simple return of orality was impossible. At the same time, it reveals that lessons of enhanced communication and discussion could be learned from history to improve reading.

In Tieck's novel poetry recitations and song recitals often lead to discussions about the poems or songs and thus take their reception to a higher level. This quality represents another important aspect of the oral tradition. Although discussions entered print culture,³⁶ they nonetheless tended to maintain a strong oral component. In the novel, such discussions also serve as alternatives to books: "Albrecht [Dürer] erzählte, und Franz Sternbald saß in tiefen Gedanken. In den letzten Worten des Lukas schien ihm der Schlüssel, die Auflösung zu allen seinen Zweifeln zu liegen, nur konnte er den Gedanken nicht deutlich fassen; er hatte von seinem Lehrmeister noch nie eine ähnliche Äußerung über die Kunst gehört, sie auch in keinem seiner Bücher angetroffen" (*FSW* 116). Conversation between Dürer and Lukas, a colleague of Dürer, exposes Franz to ideas about the fine arts that he would be unable to find in books. Discussions about art in the novel not only share information, but also connect to developments of Tieck's time. Institutions like the theater and the museum, Habermas argues, promoted aesthetic reception with a wider audience. Discussion, he asserts, became the new medium of art

³⁶ "The journals which were so crucial to the spread of Enlightenment thought, such as the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, the *Neue Thalia*, or the *Teutsche Merkur*, consisted of essays, conversation (titles often incorporate the word *Gespräch*), and reviews of and selection from new works—all comparatively short texts" (Curran 703).

appreciation (“die Diskussion wird zum Medium ihrer [Laien] Aneignung”) (57). Tieck’s novel suggests a mode of literary reception and appreciation that is embedded in discussion and facilitated by orality. In *Sternbald*, conversations and discussions often lead to storytelling and vice versa and, therefore, play an important a role in Franz’s education as a reader. Although discussions and storytelling are closely connected, however, their difference is significant. While participants in a conversation can alternate between listening and speaking, the roles in a storytelling session are clearly fixed between the storyteller and his audience. Tieck’s novel explores the changing roles of the participants by presenting storytelling and discussion as inseparable: storytelling often grows out of conversations and is frequently interrupted by discussions. This kind of presentation allows for different formulations of knowledge. Tieck appears to return to the idea that knowledge can be stored in the mind, as opposed to writing, which stores knowledge outside it.³⁷ In addition, the community that arises from storytelling and conversations constantly changes, providing an opportunity to find the best discussion partners. It also offers immediate exchange and instantaneous feedback. For example, it is the setting of spontaneous storytelling that brings Franz and Rudolf together for endless conversations and singing. This form of information sharing encourages Franz on his journey and provides him with positive examples and important information, such as the whereabouts of his beloved Marie.

One of the novel’s most important scenes, which takes place on the ship to Antwerp, combines storytelling, discussion, and reading. Moreover, it also investigates the effects of print culture. Franz finds himself engaging in singing and storytelling with a traveling company, recalling the tradition of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or Goethe’s *Unterhaltungen deutscher*

³⁷ Compare to Ong 41.

Ausgewanderten (1795) (*Conversations of German Refugees*). Although the storytelling in Tieck's novel is not triggered by any imminent danger, it does originate with the desire for entertainment: "Sie wird vorgetragen, um der Reisegesellschaft die Zeit zu verkürzen und ihr Unterhaltungsbedürfnis zu befriedigen" (Voerster 168-69).³⁸ Just like the plague in Boccaccio and the revolution in Goethe, the journey provides a pretext for entertainment. Thus, the scene continues a literary tradition that in turn documents and archives orality in written form. As Oesterle explains,

[i]n der Literatur wird die Fiktion eines sozialen, durch Mündlichkeit bestimmten Erzählraums geselliger Unterhaltung geschaffen. Das fiktive mündliche Erzählen wird literarisch durch eine Erzählkonvention gesichert. Es ist eine durch gesellschaftliche Übereinkunft gepflegte Unterhaltungsform und überlebt in der gelesenen Literatur. (171)³⁹

Goethe's *Werther* and later *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, of course, continue this literary tradition of archiving, storytelling, and correspondence. They, too, preserve and encourage a modified form of orality. Tieck's novel follows this example and becomes one of the first works of Romantic literature where the interaction between characters is embedded in orality. As Gerhard Neumann has proposed, *Sternbald* indicates that this kind of storytelling had gained a new role in Romantic literature:

Da ist aber zuletzt die *Fingierung und Inszenierung* des Mündlichen in der Schrift, wie seit Boccaccios 'Erzähltagen' in der Toskana, aber auch seit der ihr Leben durch erzählen fristenden Scheherezade in 1001 Nacht in die Kultur

³⁸ "Erzählen ist, so entwickelt es der literarische Text, notwendig angesichts von Katastrophen. In Boccaccios 'Dekameron' ist es die Pest, eine unmittelbare körperliche Bedrohung von Leib und Leben, die verschiedene, vor ihr aus Florenz aufs Land geflohene Personen veranlasst, 'sich zum Erzählen (zu) vereinig(t)en'. [...] Das mündliche Erzählen wird unter dem Druck extremer Gefahr zur Überlebensvergewisserung der einzelnen Personen und zugleich zur Fortbestandsversicherung der Erzählgemeinschaft als Ganzer, unabhängig zunächst vom Inhalt der Geschichten" (Ingrid Oesterle 170-71). In Goethe's *Unterhaltungen* (*Conversations*) the danger is political and originates with the French Revolution. Storytelling in *Sternbald* is more like that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The pilgrims tell stories to entertain themselves.

³⁹ This practice grows out of the medieval courtly tradition: "Den größten Teil ihres Publikums erreichte die höfische Literatur gewiß in der gemeinsamen Rezeption, im freien (oder textunterstützten) Vortrag und im Vorlesen" (Schön, *Der Verlust* 33).

Eingang gefunden haben; Erzählszenierungen, die dann auf neue Weise in den Erzählgemeinschaften und Erzählfamilien der Romantik zum Ereignis werden. Vielleicht ist gerade dieser Zusammenhang ‘inszenierter Mündlichkeit’ die für den Kontext romantischen Erzählens wichtigste Akzentuierung des Problems: als die poetologische Nutzung des *Konflikts von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* im Erzählakt der Novelle und des Novellenkranzes. (“Romantisches Erzählen” 11)

Orality staged through fiction, Neumann argues, had become the means for Romantic writers to express the tension between oral and print cultures. However, when orality is archived in written form, it is no longer and never again the same. Tieck’s novel demonstrates that a kind of storytelling similar to Boccaccio’s *Decameron* had become a major event in Romantic literature. In *Sternbald*, the journey to Antwerp investigates the dynamics of a community that would emerge through storytelling (*Erzählgemeinschaft*). Furthermore, this storytelling, which takes place on a ship, plays an important role in Franz’s education as a reader by allowing for the discussion of different reading roles and by highlighting the tension between oral and print culture. This tension is present, because throughout the novel staged orality (*inszenierte Mündlichkeit*)⁴⁰ is paradoxically possible only in print. Thus, the novel as written text inscribes the tropes of oral culture, such as describing spontaneous storytelling and singing or using nature as its landscape, but not the culture itself. By contrast, the reader of *Sternbald* most likely reads in a room in solitude.

While on the ship, Franz meets a young Italian poet, Rudolf Florestan, who has captured the company’s attention with his songs and his stories. By reading aloud for the assembled company, Florestan stages a complex dynamic in the relationship between *Vorleser* and audience. The scene juxtaposes solitary and silent with communal and loud reading, revealing a preference for the latter. The communal setting allows for the investigation of the relationship

⁴⁰ See also Schanze’s notion of “gebuchte Mündlichkeit” and “Verbuchung der mündlichen Tradition” in the romantic Literature (“Romantische Rhetorik” 337, 348).

between Rudolf, the storyteller and author, and his audience. However, the scene also has a connection with the changes in reading behaviors and authorship that were occurring during Tieck's time.

The episode begins by considering silent and solitary reading—a trend at the turn of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the journey, the travelers seem quiet and tired. However, one man, Vansen (an older businessman), stands out, because he begins to read a book: “Ein älthlicher Mann zog ein Buch hervor und fing an zu lesen; doch es währte nicht lange, so schlummerte er. Die übrigen schienen ein Gespräch zu wünschen” (*FSW* 136). Reading in solitude, Vansen becomes tired. The fact that he does not have the endurance to read his book offers a commentary on what silent reading requires. Vansen flees his solitude and surrenders to the travelers' wishes to sing and tell stories: “Ihr solltet nur etwas erzählen oder ein lustiges Lied singen” (*FSW* 137). He then gradually demonstrates a clear preference for communal reading, where one person assumes the role of *Vorleser* and the others that of listeners. After the song, the travelers continue with storytelling: “Ein großer Teil der Gesellschaft kam nun darauf, man solle, um die Zeit der Fahrt zu verkürzen, Geschichten oder Märchen erzählen. Alle trauten dem Rudolf zu, daß er am besten imstande sei, ihr Begehren zu erfüllen” (*FSW* 144). In this case, the purpose of storytelling is to pass the time and to entertain. Florestan volunteers to sing, but before he starts, he tries to influence the reception of his song: “Ich will mich wohl er bieten, ein Lied zu singen, wenn ich nur wüßte, daß die Herren es mit der Poesie nicht so gar genau nehmen wollten” (*FSW* 137). Florestan's comment suggests a dynamic relationship between storyteller and audience and draws his listeners' attention to the freedom of the interpreter. The meaning of the song, he says, is more than its literal rendition, and it offers an opportunity for Rudolf to educate his audience. This implies that oral culture offers two advantages. First, the author as

performer can influence his poem's reception by giving instructions. Second, he can profit from instant feedback: "Sie versicherten ihn alle, daß es nicht geschehn würde" (*FSW* 137). The response of the audience to Rudolf's request demonstrates that their relationship is based on felicitous communication. On the one hand, the audience's diverse reading strategies are instantly available to the storyteller and can have a direct affect on him: its taste might influence the choice of song or story. On the other hand, the communication between Florestan and audience allows him to impose an interpretation that is based on his authority as author. His behavior becomes characteristic of his storytelling, and he repeats this behavior when the travelers request him to continue it. Having learned from his previous experience that he has to be careful in selecting the proper song or story in order to please an audience, Rudolf warns, "allein es geht mir mit meiner Geschichte wie mit meinem Liede, sie wird keinem recht gefallen" (*FSW* 144). The travelers' reaction to his warning foreshadows the later discussion, especially Vansen's criticism of Rudolf's delivery. Nevertheless, Rudolf continues telling stories, which initiates a lively discussion in his audience.

Rudolf's relationship to his story typifies the changing role of the storyteller as a result of the emergence of print culture: "Die Bedeutung des Erzählens verändert sich im 18. Jahrhundert sehr entscheidend durch die Ausbreitung des Buchmarkts, den Siegeszug der Schriftlichkeit. [...] Der Erzähler ist darin [Geschichten] deutlicher präsent, tritt nicht hinter seinen Erzählstoff zurück" (Bormann 65). Rudolf, who is not simply a narrator, educates his audience by guiding their interpretations. Conversely, however, he is a receptive storyteller who responds to the questions of his audience, although he also asserts that his text has an authority independent of his own narrator role: "Was kann ich denn aber dafür, erwiderte Rudolf, daß der verliebte Schwärmer seinem Freunde damals diese Historie wirklich erzählt hat?" (*FSW* 424-25). As a

storyteller, then, Rudolf distances himself from the story. And such distancing differentiates his kind of storytelling from pure orality. It is writing, Ong says, that disconnects a text from its author, “knower from the known” (46), which in turn allows it to become open to new interpretations. In this sense, Rudolf is a product of a print culture that disguises itself in the oral tradition.

After Rudolf’s songs and stories, the travelers engage in lively interpretive discussions. Their conversations draw attention to the different needs and tastes of an audience, which presents pressure for the storyteller (Ong 67). Rudolf acknowledges that age, for example, affects taste: “Die alten Herren aber kümmern sich um dergleichen Neuigkeiten nicht viel” (*FSW* 144). Again, the setting of oral reading influences the relationship of the storyteller to his audience. Rudolf is concerned about his audience’s response, because it is not homogeneous. For that reason, he predicts that his story will not please everyone, but he goes on, despite the pressure, and maintains his artistic integrity, although he cannot ignore the reaction of the audience.

The story, which is highly interactive, is interrupted a number of times: when Vansen asks about the nationality of a character (*FSW* 146), when he initiates a dispute about the action of the characters (149), and finally, when he asks about the historical background of the war (159):

Den Unterbrechungen und Zwischenreden aus dem Zuhörerkreis kommt aber noch ein anderer Funktionswert zu. Durch ihre Form der Wechselrede rufen sie den Eindruck einer Zwiesprache zwischen Erzähler und Hörer hervor und wirken so mit am Zustandekommen einer Atmosphäre geselligen Erzählens, in der ja die Beziehung zwischen Erzähler und Hörer ständig gewahrt bleibt. (Voerster 168)

Such interactions serve the purpose of constructing orality and preserving community. Moreover, a lively audience contributes to the authenticity of the scene. At the end of the story, the audience reacts. Some travelers have fallen asleep, but Vansen and Franz engage actively in a

conversation about both song and story. Their discussion reveals different reading strategies and interpretations. Vansen represents a reader who constantly shares his opinion but remains focused on the surface features of the narrative or song. On some occasions, his interruptions seek clarification: “Was war der Edelmann für ein Landsmann?” Vansen wants to know. “Je nun, ich denke,” Rudolf answers, “er wird wohl ein Deutscher gewesen sein, ja, und jetzt erinnere ich mich deutlich, er war ein Franke”. After Rudolf satisfies his curiosity, Vansen permits the storyteller to continue: “Nun, so seid so gut und fahrt fort” (*FSW* 146). Just as in silent and solitary reading, the audience here determines the pace of the storytelling. Thus, Vansen at times prods his fellow listeners to express their opinions and to describe the suspense they feel: “‘Nun, der Mann hat doch wahrlich völlig recht,’ rief Vansen aus, ‘und ich bin neugierig, was der verliebte Schwärmer wohl darauf wird antworten können.’ ‘Gewiss gar nichts,’ sagte ein anderer, ‘er wird einsehn, wie gut es sein Freund mit ihm meint’” (*FSW* 149). This conversation again demonstrates the audience’s active engagement with the story. But an innocent question can also lead to interpretative discussions:

“Was kann das für ein Krieg gewesen sein?” rief V a n s e n aus. “Oh, irgendeiner,” antwortete Rudolf hastig, “Ihr müßt die Sachen nie so genau nehmen, es ist mir in der Geschichte um einen Krieg zu tun, und da müßt Ihr gar nicht fragen: Wie? Wo? Wann geschahe das?, denn solche Erzählungen sind immer nur aus der Luft gegriffen, und man muß sich für die Geschichte, aber für nichts anderes außer ihr, interessieren.” “Erlaubt,” sagt Franz bescheiden, “daß ich Euch widerspreche, denn ich bin hierhin ganz anderer Meinung. Wenn mir eine Erzählung, sei sie auch nur ein Märchen, Zeit und Ort bestimmt, so macht sie dadurch alles um so lebendiger, [...] jeder Stein, jeder Baum hat dann eine poetische Bedeutung für mich. Ebenso ist es mit der Zeit. Höre ich von einer Begebenheit, werden Namen aus der Geschichte genannt, so fallen mir zugleich jene poetischen Schatten dabei ins Gedächtnis und machen mir den ganzen Zeitraum lieber.” “Nun, das ist alles auch gut,” sagte Rudolf, “das andere aber auch, wenn man weder um Zeit noch um Ort bekümmert. So laßt es also den Hussitenkrieg gewesen sein, der alle diese Verwirrungen in unserer Familie angerichtet hat.” (*FSW* 159-60)

Vansen's questions show that as a reader he has a particular (historical) interest. As a realist, who desires details, he misses the point. Because of the setting—communal reading in the oral tradition—the storyteller must respond to the questions of the curious listener. Thus Rudolf defends the story's fictions. At this point, Franz enters the dispute and argues for the benefits and the poetical meaning of historical referentiality in a fictional text. This argument makes Rudolf capitulate to the wishes of his audience—again, he is guided by his listeners' taste. At the same time, it also shows Franz displaying a great sensibility for literary texts. In his explanation, he refers to time and place—the verbal and the visual, according to Lessing's terminology—which constitute the foundation of the literary (poetic). This scene has further implications for the novel. Real readers should understand that specific historical events might bring the story closer to the audience, but they should not be caught up in the details. These details serve as a means to provide a framework for the plot that has a specific message for the readers. In this sense, the dispute between Rudolf, Franz, and Vansen provides a reading strategy for the readers of *Sternbald*: the historical backdrop of the Reformation is just a framework to discuss contemporary trends in reading.

Franz Sternbald's interpretation of Rudolf's story reveals a reading strategy that is contrary to Vansen's. Because Franz is a self-referential reader—as his reading of images indicated—he must discover himself in what he hears:

Franz war sehr nachdenkend geworden. Fast alles, was er hörte und sah, bezog er auf sich, und so traf er in dieser Erzählung auch seine eigne Geschichte an. Sonderbar war's, daß ihn der Schluß beruhigte, daß er dem Glücke vertraute, daß es ihn seine Geliebte und seine Eltern würde finden lassen. (FSW 161)

In accord with the narrative standpoint, Franz interprets the story according to his own life and situation, which is one of the tendencies that triggers extensive reading.⁴¹ We can see how Franz constructs meaning. Kontje, juxtaposing Franz's and Rudolf's approaches, arrives at an important insight: "Thus the tales are viewed with different and conflicting claims as to their truth value," he says. "[W]hat to Sternbald seems a promising allegory of his own future is presented by Florestan as a unique historical occurrence" (*Private Lives* 93). The travelers represent a reading community but not a homogenous group. Readers construct their own interpretations according to their personalities and expectations for texts. As previously noted, Franz believes that the text reveals information about his life. But beyond the similarities in form and content, this episode plays a key role in the conceptualization of reading, marking the path of Franz's *Bildung* as a reader.⁴² The structure of the occasion for storytelling implies the purpose of the scene: to investigate, debate, and describe possible reading strategies, true authority, and authorship, activities that are the goal of the process of *Bildung*. Furthermore, the episodic nature of the scene allows Tieck to introduce new interpretations. Their differences are foregrounded

⁴¹ In fact, as discussed in the secondary literature, Rudolf's story mirrors Franz's. That is, it recalls the plot of the novel. In the later (1843) edition, Tieck added a third layer to the mirroring stories, a story within the embedded story: "Halt! rief Vansen, die Sache neigt sich zum Verwirren, daß hier eine neue Erzählung in die vorige eingeflochten wird. Und was schadet es, sagte Florestan, wenn es Euch nur unterhält und die Zeit vergeht? Es steht nur zu besorgen, sagte Peters bedächtig, daß es uns nicht unterhalten werde, denn man wird gar leicht konfuse, und da die Sache an sich selbst schon nicht sehr interessiert, so wird diese Episode das Uebel nur ärger machen. Was kann ich denn dafür, erwiderte Rudolf, daß der verliebte Schwärmer seinem Freunde damals diese Historie wirklich erzählt hat? Ich muß doch der Wahrheit getreu bleiben. Nun so erzählt wie ihr wollt, sagte Vansen, tragt die neue Geschichte vor, aber nur unter der Bedingung, daß in dieser Historie sich nicht wieder eine neue entspinnt, denn das könnte sonst bis ins Unendliche fortgesetzt werden" (FSW 424-25). "As in the first story," suggests Kontje, "this second insert sets off a lively debate among the listeners concerning its plausibility. But even before the story is told, Vansen finds it annoying that the original narrative should be interrupted. [...] Vansen grudgingly permits Florestan to continue, provided that he does not add still more stories to the story within the story, 'because otherwise it could be continued forever'" (*Private Lives* 92-93). Rudolf's reason for telling the newly embedded text that it would help pass the time is ironic and fails to win over his audience.

⁴² The relationship of Rudolf's story to Tieck's novel has been discussed in the secondary literature. Geulen emphasizes that the function of seemingly arbitrary stories within the novel is to provide an orientation for the reader in terms of the connection between past, present, and future (294-95). Along similar lines, Thomas Schmidt discusses Rudolf's story in terms of its similar structure to the plot (81). Similarly, Meuthen argues that the embedded story reflects the plot of the novel and anticipates a happy ending for Franz's story ("...denn er" 387).

during the discussion; however, they can clearly coexist. The interpretative variations suit different types of readers and their goals. Tieck's novel creates an environment in which readers with opposing views can enter a discussion about their interpretations, but are not forced to give up their separate views. Significantly, however, it is not the act of reading that constitutes the ultimate goal of the *Bildung* of the modern reader. Rather, it is the discussion that emerges as a result of reading. Both Franz and Vansen resist Rudolf's attempt to prescribe interpretation. Moreover, the scene emphasizes the distance between author and reader, despite their physical closeness through the communal setting in the oral tradition. It is clear that primary orality cannot be restored. In this scene, we can see the effect of print culture, which promotes a variety of interpretations, encourages different reading strategies, and distances the author and reader. Because of this distance, authors cannot take part in the readers' *Bildung* as directly as storytellers could. At the same time, however, the scene pleads for a secondary orality that facilitates discussion and exchange within the audience and among the readers and writers.

3.2.3 Biographies

The discussion scenes and many of the singing episodes often involve small audiences and therefore provide opportunities to reflect on primary orality, as well as to explore social forms from communal to solitary reading. These small audiences are always different, changing, and open, and they possess the possibility for growth. But we also often find Franz portrayed as a solitary reader and passive listener who reflects privately on what he has heard. This kind of setting is repeated throughout the novel in the telling of life stories that engage only the storyteller and a solitary audience. Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, Franz Sternbald listens to—that is, reads—the life stories of others. Here reading constructed as “listening” offers a way of

teaching involvement. Each new reading situation provides Franz with new perspectives on his own life and increases his involvement with others. The biographical accounts of artists affect him personally and move him beyond the role of passive recipient. Thus, he occasionally influences a storyteller's life through his active listening. Such scenes involve as a didactic move to teach a method of reading. For example, in his first encounter with a stranger on his journey, Franz hears the story of Messy, a journeyman blacksmith: "Der Fremde erzählte hierauf unserem Freunde, daß er ein Schmiedegeselle sei und eben auf der Wanderschaft begriffen" (*FSW* 21). Although the actual story is never told, we learn that Messy, who is seeking to become a craftsman, has also expressed an interest in the arts. Franz, therefore, encourages him to become a painter, which demonstrates the power of direct communication in the oral tradition. Reader or listener and storyteller mutually influence each other.

In all the reading situations that involve biographies, in fact, it seems that Franz prompts people to tell him their stories. As an active listener, he is able to gain the trust of his interlocutors. This is especially so with the old hermit, who soon trusts his guest with excerpts of his life story: "Ich will Euch kürzlich meine Geschichte im Auszuge erzählen, damit Ihr begreifen könnt, wie ich hierhergeraten bin" (*FSW* 260). Subsequently, Franz's interruptions demonstrate his active engagement and enthusiasm as a listener: "Franz fiel ihm in die Rede, [...] 'Und ich erstaune über das, was Ihr mir sagt,' rief Sternbald aus" (*FSW* 261). Franz is the only character who lends credence to the hermit's stories, moreover. Others in the neighborhood believe he is a lunatic ("halb wahnsinnig") (*FSW* 247). And while Tieck's novel appears to advocate the restoration of oral culture, the community's relationship to the old man is paradigmatic for the influence of print on orality. The hermit is unable to establish a venerable position in the community, where, through storytelling, he could pass on his wisdom. Instead, he

acquires the reputation of a lunatic who cannot be trusted. But if we look at the construction of his character in the context of both oral and print cultures, we can gain insights about the kind of a storyteller the old wise man represents. With the emergence of print, writing supplanted speaking as the primary means of transmitting knowledge in popular culture. This change, Ong says, shattered the status of the wise old man and woman (41). As a result, the spoken word lost its authority, while at the same time, the printed text gained credibility. Franz, in agreement with the community's opinion, questions the mental state of the old man talking about art ("er war ungewiß, ob der Maler wirklich vom Wahnsinn befallen sei oder ob er nur die Sprache der Künstler rede" *FSW* 256). However, when the hermit tells him about his life, it affects Franz positively, thereby indicating that certain features of the oral tradition may also be valuable.

Franz's active listening also has a positive effect on the storytellers at the outset of his journey, and it prepares him to encounter and listen to biographies. When he listens to the sad and lonely countess during a casual conversation, for example, his behavior encourages her to tell him her story: "Sie setzten sich im Schatten nieder, und nach einem kleinen Stillschweigen fuhr die Dame fort: 'Ich will Euch kürzlich meine ganze Geschichte erzählen; sie ist unbedeutend und kurz, aber Ihr habt etwas in Eurem Wesen, einen Blick Eurer Augen, das alles mir mein Zutrauen abgewinnt'" (*FSW* 246). Franz never disappoints a storyteller, because he responds emotionally. "Franz konnte nach ihrer Erzählung nichts antworten, er blieb in sich gekehrt und wünschte seinen Freund Florestan zurück, der sich in jede Lage des Lebens mit Leichtigkeit fand" (*FSW* 247). His careful listening already in the conversation prior to the countess's first person account prompts her to tell him about her life. He therefore facilitates storytelling through his active engagement. The countess's story awakens the insatiable reader in Franz and evokes his longing for another storyteller, Florestan, with whom he later reconnects to

learn the other side of the story. Franz's reading behavior not only features extensive reading, but also shows how the reading of one text prompts a reading of the next one. Moreover, further reading can add a different perspective and complement what has been read before.

The other side of the countess's story, however, reveals the inevitable effect of print culture on the oral tradition, as print mediates between author and audience. By using Rudolf as the mediator, Tieck's novel embeds the effects of print in the oral tradition. Franz hears the other side of the countess's story through his friend. The countess's lost lover is a recluse (*Einsiedler*) who offers accommodation to the two friends and tells his story to Rudolf while Franz is sleeping. Despite the fact that Franz hears the story second hand, he sympathizes with the recluse. The story affects him deeply, because he characteristically recognizes himself in the narrative: "Franz dachte an das Bildnis, an den Tod seiner Geliebten und sagte seufzend [...]" (*FSW* 288). In contrast to the other biographies, there is no communication here between Franz and the storyteller. Thus Rudolf assumes a mediating role like that played by written texts or books. As Rudolf tells someone else's story, he eliminates the need for the original storyteller. He can repeat the story anytime, anywhere, just as a book can be opened. He does not act here as a storyteller who could engage in discussion, but rather as the medium of a recorded story—"a written text" that, as Ong would say, "is basically unresponsive" (79). The lack of reciprocal communication between storyteller and audience, however, does not influence the story's reception. In fact, the mediator—here Rudolf or books in general—ensures that more people have access to the text. Franz compares his situation to that of the *Einsiedler* (recluse), which leads to a direct dialogue with the protagonist of this embedded text. Franz thus minimizes Rudolf's role (*FSW* 301). This kind of relationship between text and reader is more characteristic

of print culture, as books transform the relationship between author and audience. As the storyteller loses a direct relationship to his audience, he gains more readers.

In general, Tieck's novel portrays oral reading situations positively. However, stories like Roderigo's biography also demonstrate the problematic nature of the oral tradition. Personal contact can interfere with the reception of stories. The biography is not easily accessible to Franz, because Roderigo is always being interrupted by accidental events. This leaves Franz frustrated and unfulfilled. Looking at the transmission of Roderigo's narrative at length is useful. The introduction to his story makes Franz curious, because, as on other occasions, he sees similarities between himself and the story's protagonist: "'Er fiel mir nur dabei ein,' sagte der Mönch, 'weil seine Geschichte recht sehr sonderbar ist und weil der junge Maler [Franz Sternbald] dort ihm auf eine wunderbare Weise ähnlich sieht, so daß ich an jenen alten denke, seitdem wir miteinander gegangen sind.' 'Könnt Ihr uns seine Geschichte erzählen?' fragte Franz" (FSW 215). Whereas the story appears to have come to Roderigo's mind casually, Franz anticipates its significance for his own life. However, a party of hunters interrupts Roderigo, which upsets Franz but not his companion, Bolz, who though disinterested in the story, is forced to listen to it because storytelling is an audible experience: "Laßt um des Himmels willen Eure langweiligen Erzählungen" (FSW 216). It is possible to see different readerly reactions and expectations for a text here. Bolz's needs as a reader are different from Franz's. However, they do not lessen his desire to listen and learn: "'Er hätte uns,' fuhr Sternbald fort, 'die Geschichte des alten Mannes erzählen sollen, von dem er sprach. Vielleicht hätte ich daraus viel für mich selbst gelernt'" (FSW 219). Even though Franz has yet not heard the story, his reading strategy is clear. In accordance with contemporary theories of reading that suggest books can substitute for life experience (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 205), he is looking for whatever refers to his

own life. This substitution is characteristic of the Romantic novel: “Literatur und Leben sind es, die im Roman vermittelt werden sollen” (Schanze, “Romantheorie” 16). Before Franz hears this story (*FSW* 329), more interruptions follow, leaving him frustrated (*FSW* 306-7). By this point in the novel, he has learned that stories might be significant in his personal quest, and he is, therefore, impatient to hear the story. This determination makes him an insatiable and dedicated reader (or listener).

These two reading episodes suggest that face-to-face encounters between storytellers and listeners can be problematic. The two stories in question highlight contemporary trends of Tieck’s time, including the emergence of extensive reading and a reading mania that still remains tied to orality. The recluse’s story demonstrates that a direct connection with the narrator is not necessary to affect a reader’s emotion. This was also the effect of books that caused the *Lesewut* (reading mania) at the end of the century. Furthermore, by entering one reading situation after another, Franz convincingly demonstrates the traits of the extensive reader. Songs and poems provide a constant source of new reading experiences. And we find the more important reading situations in Franz’s education embedded in them. Biographies, including Messy’s, the old hermit’s, the countess’, and the recluse’s stories, support Franz’s journey on the personal level. Rudolf’s story not only shows Franz’s readerly behavior, but also the emergence of a community of readers engaging in discussions. All these situations constitute a significant part of Franz’s education as reader by showing that reading can promote his *Bildung*. However, they do not conclude his education, which as with Wilhelm, will require the transition from reader to writer.

3.2.4 Painter, Reader, and Writer

An important part of this investigation is not only the actual reading, listening, and reception of texts through painting, but also their production and relation to visual images. In addition to the many ways that Franz appears as reader, he actively engages in writing. To appreciate the painter Franz's action as both reader and writer, it is important to understand literacy in the sixteenth century. Although more people were reading than ever before, far fewer were able to write. As Scribner emphasizes, we have to differentiate between "literacy as ability to write and as ability to read" (2). However, Luther's time marked the beginning of a process that brought reading and writing closer together. By contrast, even though Franz prepares for a career as painter, at the beginning of the novel he appears, like Wilhelm, to be an active reader and writer. His behavior demonstrates the traits of a modern, extensive reader.

I have argued that Tieck's novel establishes a relationship between oral, visual, and print culture. By presenting its protagonist as a painter who is a reader and listener, as well as a writer it considers the processes of aesthetic production—that is, *schreiben* and *malen*—as well as the relationship between persons authoring textual and visual works, *Dichter* and *Maler*. Wenzel describes this relationship during the late Medieval period as follows: "Derart beziehen sich die Schreiber auf Maler, während umgekehrt die Maler gern auf den Vorrang von Schrift und Wort verweisen" (297). Franz Sternbald, as a young painter, also has poetic aspirations and is often mistaken for a poet. Thus, on the ship, his interpretation of Rudolf's song makes others believe that he is a poet ("'Ihr seid wohl selber Poet?' rief des Fremde aus") (FSW 142). Korff's description of him pinpoints his shifting identity: "Immer schwebt ihm [Franz] etwas vor, was sich nicht völlig malen läßt, und sein Künstlertum scheint mehr Poetentum als Malertum zu sein"

(68).⁴³ Similarly, conversations in the novel make the connection thematic between painter and poet to the point that they appear to be interchangeable: “Wißt Ihr aber wohl, Albrecht, welchen Schluß man aus dieser Bemerkung ziehn könnte? daß es also in den Sachen selbst, die der Poet oder Maler oder irgendein Künstler darstellen wollte, durchaus nichts Unnatürliches geben könne” (*FSW* 115). Lukas recognizes that artistic expression is an essential part of humankind, regardless of its medium. More important is the idea that aesthetic forms establish communication between artist and audience.

Throughout the novel, however, Franz is the only character who embodies both painter and poet. He often engages in writing that parallels his reading. Typically he writes poems: “Die Sonne stieg prächtig herauf, als Franz sich niedersetzte und folgende Verse in seine Schreibtafel einschrieb” (*FSW* 169); “Um sich zu zerstreuen, schrieb er folgendes [Gedicht “Phantasie”] in seiner Schreibtafel nieder” (*FSW* 348); and “Als Franz diesen Brief geendigt hatte, nahm er seine Zither und spielte darauf, wodurch er bewegt ward, folgende Verse niederzuschreiben” (*FSW* 372). But for Franz, writing stands in opposition to painting. First, it is a spontaneous activity that does not require planning and extensive tools. It also often offers a way for him to deal with emotional events. And it allows him to engage with an audience. Although he initially seeks to write in privacy, he is soon dissatisfied with solitude and must read his poem to an audience: “Der Morgen brach indessen an, die übrigen im Hause wurden munter, und Franz las dem Bildhauer seine Verse vor” (*FSW* 353). As writing turns into reading, reception gains importance. Bolz’s reaction is included in the novel, as is Franz’s to his own poem: “[er] lächelte über seine nächtliche Einbildung” (*FSW* 353). The communication between the two characters allows Franz to reflect on his own writing. Whereas the subject matter of a painting is often

⁴³ Compare to Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*: “Ich könnte jetzt nicht zeichnen, nicht einen Strich, und bin nie ein größerer Maler gewesen als in diesen Augenblicken” (*FA*, Vol. 1/8, 15).

dictated by a religious or literary text or someone's request for documentation (personal portraits), Franz can more readily express himself in writing.⁴⁴

The importance of writing and reading for painting becomes clear through the correspondence between the characters. According to Blackall, letters shape Franz's journey, though not necessarily his *Bildung* (160). I argue that they are important for his *Bildung* as well. Franz regularly exchanges letters with his friend Sebastian and occasionally with others, such as Dürer. On the first day after leaving Nürnberg, he reflects on his journey by writing about it in his tablet, almost as a diary entry, which will lead to the first letter to his friend: "Franz setzte sich auf den Rasen und zog seine Schreibtafel heraus, um den Tag seiner Auswanderung anzumerken" (FSW 21). New impressions always move him to write Sebastian: "Noch in der selben Nacht fing er einen Brief an seinen Freund Sebastian an" (FSW 30). And while he introduces the letter by announcing its superfluity: "Ich habe Dir eigentlich nichts zu schreiben" (FSW 30-31), still he writes a note.⁴⁵

Other letters document Franz's poetic aspirations. He quotes poems and reproduces them for Sebastian in his letters: "Es gibt ein Lied eines alten Minnesängers, ich weiß nicht, ob Du Dich dessen noch erinnerst" (FSW 80). Reproducing a poem evokes the wish to be a poet: "Oft möchte' ich alles in Gedichten niederschreiben, und ich fühle es jetzt, wie die Dichter entstanden sind" (FSW 83). Indeed, he ends the letter with a poem of his own: "Diese ungeschickten Zeilen habe ich gestern in einem angenehmen Walde gedichtet; meine ganze Seele war darauf

⁴⁴ Other figures engage in writing as well. As already mentioned, Florestan's main role in the novel is a storyteller and a singer and, thus, it should not surprise us that he also appears as a writer: "Ich habe gestern noch, lieber Franz, ein anderes Gedicht geschrieben, in dem ich versucht habe, eine Stimmung auszudrücken und darzustellen, die schon oft meine Seele erfüllt hat" (FSW 241), and "Rodulf nahm seine Schreibtafel und schrieb etwas hinein [...] Nach einer halben Stunde suchte Florestan seinen Freund und las ihm folgendes Gedicht vor, das Sternbald sehr bewegte" (FSW 302). Although the poem itself presented in loud reading, the act of writing is depicted here, which seems equally important to the act of reading or listening.

⁴⁵ Notably Franz never has a similar urge to paint.

hingewandt, und ich bin nicht errötet, sie Dir, Sebastian, niederzuschreiben” (FSW 85). This scene becomes prototypical for Franz as the novel moves on. His dilemma whether to be a painter or a poet even influences the way that other characters perceive him. “Ein Mädchen gegenüber nahm den Blumenstrauß von der weißen Brust und warf ihn Franzen nach den Augen, indem sie ausrief: ‘Ihr solltet ein Dichter sein, Freund, und kein Maler, dann solltet Ihr lieben und Euch täglich in einem neuen Sonette hören lassen’” (FSW 380). These examples demonstrate how Franz’s inner shift from painter to poet is recognizable throughout the novel. Meuthen’s observation about Franz’s plan for his painting of the Annunciation Day is paradigmatic, as it recalls Lessing’s differentiation between visual image and text: “[e]s wird nicht mehr als Nebeneinander, sondern Nacheinander wahrgenommen, an die Stelle des räumlichen Schemas des Bildes tritt das zeitliche der Erzählung” (*Eins und doppelt* 102). This change takes place not only in the artistic object, but in the protagonist as he becomes a poet. Thus, the second book of Part II ends with an impression of Franz as a poet rather than as a painter.⁴⁶ Moved by the fulfillment of love, he would like to share his emotions with his friend Sebastian, but he is unable to compose a letter: “Er wollte seinem Sebastian schreiben, aber er konnte nicht zur Ruhe kommen. Er fing an, aber seine Gedanken verließen ihn, er schrieb folgendes nieder” (FSW 400). Significantly, the novel ends with the image of Franz writing a poem.

Like Wilhelm, who moves from the theater through reading to writing, Franz moves from painting, through reading, to writing. However, in Tieck’s novel the community engaging in public discussion establishes a reading culture for a wide and open audience that stands in opposition to the reading culture in the *Lehrjahre*. Whereas Goethe’s novel follows Wilhelm’s

⁴⁶ Tieck’s novel remained a fragment (Kahn 47-8; Kontje, *Private Lives* 89-90; Hofmann 53).

education as a reader and leads to his acceptance of the narrow audience of the *Turmgesellschaft* (Society of the Tower), Tieck's novel, by criticizing the *Lehrjahre*'s exclusive reading culture, presents an open environment that welcomes readers. With that, *Sternbald* also expands the space of reading. As Franz leaves Nuremberg, he is surrounded by lively, ever-changing communities. These are not tied to a membership, however, and their reading is spontaneous. They ensure further occasions for reading, storytelling, singing, and discussion and remain open to the possibility that new readers (or listeners) may join them. Where the *Lehrjahre* advocates exclusivity, *Sternbald* suggests that the popularizing capacity of literature and culture is a worthy challenge.

4.0 HEINRICH VON OFTERDINGEN

Discussions of Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) often begin with Goethe's *Lehrjahre* and Tieck's *Sternbald*. Although the relationship of the novels is evident and well researched in the scholarship,¹ critics have rarely offered a comparative analysis of how they treat reading. In this chapter I will show that *Ofterdingen*, like Goethe's and Tieck's novels, reflects upon the historical determination in relation to modern trends. But the novel also goes on to synthesize how reading is treated by its predecessors. For Novalis, the modern reader, who is both solitary and extensive, aspires to a career within the institution of literature and, therefore, must read professionally.

A common thread in the scholarship is to interpret the historical setting of the novel as a backdrop to commentaries about Novalis's age. The story of *Ofterdingen*, like *Sternbald*'s, is set

¹ Blackall writes that "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is to a certain extent an anti-*Wilhelm Meister*, or perhaps one might better say a *Wilhelm Meister* as it should have been. For it is undeniable that, despite his harsh strictures on Goethe's novel, Novalis would never have written *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* without *Wilhelm Meister*" (18-19). Later, he adds, "The second stage was affected by Novalis's meeting with Ludwig Tieck, already a practicing novelist whose *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798) was an artist novel approximating in some respects to the romantic conception of the genre, and by his visit to Goethe in July 1799. [...] It is clear that this thinking began during the encounter with *Wilhelm Meister*" (108-09). Along similar lines, Kahn writes, "Any discussion about the two romantic novels [*Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*] must begin with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96). [...] If, nevertheless, an attempt is made here to trace the influence of Tieck's novel on Novalis' masterpiece, it is with the hope of thereby throwing some light on a few perplexing themes and motifs in *Ofterdingen*" (40-49). Minden adds, "Novalis quite explicitly conceived his novel as an answer to Goethe's. [...] But many disparate literary possibilities, from the medieval sources of the plot and characters to the Indian play *Sakuntala*, are combined in the work, and the authority or paradigm for literary combination with which Novalis worked was the novel, and the novel was *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* [...] Novalis was preoccupied with Goethe's novel from its appearance in 1795 until his death. In his first responses Novalis expressed enthusiasm and appreciation, seeing in the novel a paradigm of poetic practice and achievement. Later, however, he seemed to turn against it and condemn it for its anti-poetic nature, for siding with reason and common sense against poetry [...]. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is then the proper 'poetisation of the novel,' started, but not finished, by Goethe. [...] [It is] a continuation of Novalis's working out of his deeply felt and complex response to the *Lehrjahre*" (169-72). See also Pikulik (217-19), Schmaus, *Die Poetische Konstruktion des Selbst* (58), and Stadler (150ff).

in the distant past, more precisely the High Middle Ages around the thirteenth century.² Beginning in the twelfth century, print culture began to emerge as a competitor to oral culture. Therefore, like Tieck's German Reformation in *Sternbald*, Novalis's setting represents an oral culture and a landscape of reading that includes reading aloud to an audience, listening to stories, and reading actual books in a private setting.³ In this context, the growing use of vernacular texts and printed books during Europe in the twelfth century is important, because these trends inevitably promoted reading (Schön, "Geschichte des Lesens" 10).

Scholars interpret the connection between the novel's historical setting and Novalis's times in different ways. Kasperowski, for example, sees the usage of the Middle Ages in the novel as a vehicle for Novalis to participate in contemporary discourse (228). Johnson, on the other hand, emphasizes the paradoxical presentation of this historical moment as both regressive and modern: "The construction of history and identity through memory and imagination in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* presents readers with a fictionalized history that is both exceedingly regressive (depicting a hyper-idealized medieval past) as well as aggressively 'modern' (valorizing a hero with no history)" (120).⁴ Saul argues that Goethe's *Lehrjahre* influenced Novalis's *Ofterdingen* and that Novalis uses the Middle Ages as a commentary about his own age as opposed to the present (153). Similarly, Kahn observes that, like Tieck, Novalis uses the setting as "a new way to describe his personal experiences and the problems of his generation" (50). Kontje further expands the investigation of the relationship of the novel's historical time to contemporary issues, by analyzing *Ofterdingen* in the context of the contemporary book trade

² Kasperowski shows that Novalis scholars do not agree which period of the Middle Ages provides the historical background to Novalis's novel (133-34). However, she demonstrates that the time period corresponds to the High Middle Ages (*Hochmittelalter*) (175).

³ Cf. Saenger (121-22).

⁴ See also Minden (175).

and focusing on the economic status of writers in the late eighteenth century, including Novalis's own aspiration to produce a "sort of metabook" (*Private Lives* 101).⁵

I agree with Kontje that Novalis's novel does not display a "sentimental longing for an idyllic past," but rather engages with contemporary issues (*Private Lives* 107). But analyzing it in the context of the history of reading can offer more than just insight into the status of the writer. By focusing his attention on the stories within the novel and their relationship to the main narrative, Kontje concludes that the novel "formulates a utopian model of restored harmony" where literature "has taken on the role of a secular scripture" (121). A more detailed analysis of the reading situations in *Ofterdingen*, however, will show how Novalis constructed reading in the context of its historical development by reacting to Goethe's and Tieck's novels, or by narrowing the number and types of reading situations in order to synthesize the models of reading they had established. As I have shown, the *Lehrjahre* explores the transition from intensive to extensive reading by placing these modalities between reading in a community and reading in solitude. *Sternbald*, less concerned with the complexities of this transition, focuses on the communal aspect of reading by exploring how a revitalized orality can affect a rapidly changing reading culture. *Ofterdingen*, by contrast, finally reflects on the inherent contradiction of efforts to enhance reading culture by restoring orality. For Novalis, the emergence of extensive solitary readers was final and irreversible.

Tieck's novel expanded the reading situations first featured in the *Lehrjahre* by multiplying the occasions where storytelling or singing takes place. Novalis, however, offers fewer occasions for reading than either of his predecessors—even though Heinrich's journey to

⁵ Kontje emphasizes that the novel offers "self-reflexive moment[s]" that help us better understand Novalis's own time (*Private Lives* 107).

and stay in Augsburg consist almost exclusively of storytelling.⁶ The *Lehrjahre*, then, explores the transition from intensive to extensive reading, which *Sternbald* completes by presenting a reading protagonist who rapidly moves from one text to another.⁷ *Ofterdingen*, by contrast, forgoes any overt contrast and simply assumes that extensive reading has become established. Nonetheless, like *Sternbald*, the novel investigates the behavior of the modern extensive reader with an oral tradition.

All three novels, therefore, explore orality, but in different ways. As we have seen, the *Lehrjahre* features settings, such as theatrical performances and rehearsals, storytelling sessions, and recitations, which are informed by orality. But it does not end with the successful conclusion of a shift from the audible and social components of the oral tradition. Rather, Goethe suggests that reading aloud in a communal setting should be preserved. Tieck's novel then responds to the *Lehrjahre* precisely at this point by featuring a secondary orality that facilitates artistic reception and discussion, while *Ofterdingen* uses its historical setting to explore further the advantages of the oral tradition. In fact, orality comes to dominate *Ofterdingen*, where actual books appear infrequently and where storytelling becomes a significant form for sharing information and transmitting knowledge. As Kittler argues, "Daß ein angehender Dichter wie Ofterdingen alten Bergleuten 'ungemein' gern zuhört, ist Information über die Informationsnetze von 1800" ("*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß" 482-83). Whereas his remarks focus on the content of Novalis's stories configured as information, I will analyze the novel's storytellers and listeners by comparing their behaviors and relationships to the contents of their narratives.

⁶ "Sicher, Hardenbergs Roman ist—womöglich wie kein zweiter—aus lauter Gesprächen gemacht" (Kittler, "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß" 480).

⁷ This, together with the fact that Tieck offers numerous examples of extensive reading and only a few outmoded instances of intensive reading, suggests that extensive reading had become his preferred mode.

Why does Novalis represent his own reading and learning experiences, which were grounded in printed texts, through a protagonist who is so emphatically embedded in the oral tradition?⁸ I argue that he uses the medieval setting and the oral tradition to expand the inquiry about reading. Novalis's setting allows him to reconcile the role of the ear (hearing) in the process of reception and to examine contemporary trends by investigating their historical roots. While Heinrich's occasional exposure to printed texts acknowledges the inevitability of print, the setting also calls attention to Romanticism's emerging interest in oral culture. As Frank emphasizes, after the emergence of print media, Romanticism turned with growing interest to the spoken language of the common people. A sign of this change is the turn to genres such as the *Volkslied* (folk song) and *Volksmärchen* (folktale). But while these forms figured prominently in the oral culture of the period, as they were collected, preserved, and archived by the Grimm brothers and others (12), they were also embedded in print. Just as folk songs connect both cultures, the novel shows that the new orality cannot escape print. In fact, the tension between the two is evident throughout. Scenes in which Heinrich listens to stories serve as commentaries about contemporary reading behaviors. As Bosse asserts, reading and listening often share traits: "Die Leser sind nichts anderes als Zuhörer mit verstärkter Aufmerksamkeit" (*Autorschaft* 20). At the same time, storytelling in the novel makes the case for a new oral culture. Ultimately, however, orality is shown to be at a disadvantage in its competition with print. As Wellbery emphasizes, "orality does not occupy a place in the world, is not a technology of the word" (191). Accordingly, the oral culture that Novalis creates in his novel is an idealized condition that becomes a goal of narrative desire, but cannot really be achieved.

⁸ "Und in der Tat: Ofterdingens Bildungsreise durch mündliche Erzählungen wiederholt Hardenbergs Bildungsreise durch alle Bücher der Epoche. [...] Ofterdingen darf hören und d.h. mühelos aufnehmen, was Hardenberg alles gelesen hat" (Kittler, "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß" 493).

4.1 STORYTELLING

The limited and unexciting plot of Novalis's novel provides a framework for storytelling and discussions. As Kittler puts it, "*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* represents no actions at all. Instead, chapter after chapter brings into play what at the time constituted sources of information" ("A Discourse on Discourse" 162).⁹ As the novel opens, we find the protagonist Heinrich traveling to Augsburg and discover that his adventures do not take place in a 'real,' or recognizable world of the quotidian, but in the world of fiction. Stories, songs, and discussions facilitated by Heinrich's mother, the merchants, an old miner, the war refugee Zulima, a hermit, the poet Klingsohr, and the recluse and physician Sylvester shape the spare plot. In the opening pages of the novel, Heinrich reflects on a story that he has just heard from a stranger:

[D]och weiß ich nicht, warum nur ich von seinen Reden so ergriffen worden bin; die andern haben ja das nämliche gehört, und keinem ist so etwas begegnet. Daß ich auch nicht einmal von meinem wunderlichen Zustande reden kann! (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 195)¹⁰

The story in question is not included in the novel, although Heinrich's reaction to it is. According to Kuzniar, Heinrich's inability to interpret the story exemplifies his difficulty in understanding the past (*Delayed Endings* 103). Beyond the problem of interpretation, I would add, the opening scene achieves two goals. First, it sets the novel from the start within the oral tradition. Heinrich

⁹ To Kittler, information is the knowledge that was available at Novalis's time: "With a minuteness of detail that only theoretical texts used to display, history speaks, archeology speaks, politics and economics speaks, not to forget mining and poetology—and each of these discourses addresses the poet and listener Ofterdingen, who substitutes for the reader Hardenberg" ("A Discourse on Discourse" 162).

¹⁰ All quotations from Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* come from Paul Kluckhohn's and Richard Samuel's critical edition and are cited as *Schriften*, Vol. 1.

recalls a story he has heard. Because it has not been recorded or archived even for the real reader, he must rely on his memory (and we on our imagination) to consider it. And Heinrich will have to rely on his memory in this way time and again.¹¹ He must store information in his memory, because written documents that archive such information are unavailable. The opening scene sets the stage for a series of conversations and storytelling situations that contribute to Heinrich's education.

Mahoney sees the function of the conversations and embedded stories in *Ofterdingen* as twofold: they “not only play a major role in Heinrich's development into a poet but also illuminate the meaning of the novel by functioning as parallel narratives that provide a running commentary on the significance of the tale Heinrich as a character has yet to discover for himself” (“The Apprenticeship” 104).¹² However, he never considers in detail the function of the stories and discussions in his development. Not only would such an analysis confirm Mahoney's observation by elaborating the protagonist's relationship to and his reception of these texts, it would also lead to a better understanding of the shift in reading traditions that the novel represents.

The discussion of the embedded stories and their function in the novel remains largely undeveloped in the scholarship and has led to differing conclusions. Link, for example, points out that the poets' stories have been mediated as literature: “Es fällt auf, daß ein großer Teil der als Dichter zu verstehenden Gestalten dem Ablauf des Romans nicht unmittelbar angehört, vielmehr tauchen die meisten nur vermittelt auf [...] Die Wörter ‘Sagen’ und ‘fabelhaft’ betonen

¹¹ The role of memory marks one of the major differences between hearing an orally narrated story and reading a printed text.

¹² Mahoney repeats this claim in his later book on Novalis: “Die Funktion der Träume, Erzählungen, Gespräche und Gedichte im Roman ist es, diese Einsicht in Heinrich zu wecken. Gleichzeitig dienen diese Einlagen dazu, dass der Roman sich selbst deutet” (*Friedrich von Hardenberg* 128). See also Link (170-71).

dabei unauffällig das literarische Moment der Vermittlungen” (142). At the same time, however, she assigns little importance to such mediation, which she notes only and incidentally as a “literary moment.” Developing Link’s aperçu, I would recall that while mediation can occur in different ways, it always requires a storyteller and, just as importantly, a listener. Along these lines, Kuzniar claims that Heinrich “listens to many tales which, although they impress him, fail to uncover their full meaning to him” and that the influence of the three tales “upon Heinrich remains undefined” (“Reassessing” 83-84). And Kahn asserts that “Heinrich’s education is generally achieved through listening and talking to older and more experienced people, mostly men” (52).¹³

To understand just how the stories work in Novalis’s *Bildungsroman*, it is important to discuss them in the other examples of the genre as well, as Kahn begins to do by juxtaposing *Ofterdingen* and *Sternbald*. However, I do not agree with his claim that “[t]hese discussions, which lead to the telling of stories, tales, and biographical reminiscences by some of the important figures [...] far surpass Tieck’s less conscious method” (52). As I have in fact shown, by incorporating numerous songs, tales, and discussions, Tieck’s so-called “less conscious

¹³ Many of Heinrich’s mentors are *well-read* men who take their experience from or show a great appreciation for books. Heinrich’s first teacher is his father. Although we do not know much about his father’s education, it is clear from the father’s story about his trip to Rome that he has a respect for books: “Die Stube war voll Bücher und Altertümer. [...] Es war mir, als sei ich in einer neuen Welt ans Land gestiegen. [...] Noch jetzt heitert mein Herz sich auf, wenn ich mich des bunten Gewühls der wunderlichen Gedanken und Empfindungen erinnere, die mich in dieser Nacht erfüllten” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 200). The hermit in the cave has respect for books like Heinrich’s father; he also owns a collection of them: “Für meine Waren tausche ich mir in entlegenen Ortschaften Lebensmittel ein, Bücher hab ich mir mitgebracht, und so vergeht die Zeit, wie ein Augenblick. [...] Sie [der Einsiedler und Heinrich] sahen mehrere Bücher auf der Erde liegen, auch eine Zither, und an der Wand hing eine völlige Rüstung, die ziemlich kostbar zu sein schien. [...] Der Einsiedler zeigte ihnen seine Bücher. Es waren alte Historien und Gedichte” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 256-264). Of course, Klingsohr has a collection of books in his study that he makes accessible to Heinrich: “Nachmittags führte Klingsohr seinen neuen Sohn, an dessen Glück seine Mutter und Großvater den zärtlichsten Anteil nahmen, und Mathilden wie seinen Schutzgeist verehrten, in seine Stube, und machte ihn mit den Büchern bekannt” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 284). Similarly, Sylvester predicts a future for Heinrich with plenty reading: “Ewig wird er lesen und ich nicht satt lesen und täglich neue Bedeutungen, neue entzückendere Offenbarungen der liebenden Natur gewahr werden” (329).

method” promotes a kind of reading that includes a wider audience. By contrast, because Heinrich’s poetic calling focuses his *Bildung* on a limited, elite readership, Novalis’s “more conscious method” recalls the *Lehrjahre*, which features the highly restricted audience in the Society of the Tower. Furthermore, and as Pikulik notes, Heinrich is more explicitly constructed as a reader than either Wilhelm or Heinrich:

Welches der ideale Leser des *Ofterdingen* sein könnte, wird von Novalis selber gleich zu Beginn des Romans verdeutlicht. Denn er führt Heinrich zunächst als Rezipienten ein mit vorbildhaften Reaktionen auf die Erzählungen des Fremden. [...] Novalis zeigt in der Eingangspassage auch, daß solche Wirkung keine zwangsläufige ist. Andere haben dasselbe gehört und doch nicht so reagiert wie Heinrich. (239)

Pikulik singles out only two of Heinrich’s exemplary reactions as a reader, however. One occurs at the beginning of the novel, as he tries to reconstruct the story of a stranger, and the other, when he listens to the miner and the hermit in chapter five. While these scenes are important for Novalis in constructing his reader-protagonist, we need to go beyond Heinrich’s readerly reactions and ask what the reason for his enthusiasm is and what kind of relationship he has to the novel’s stories. This chapter will explore the components of each of Heinrich’s reading moments in detail. A common thread will be his personal involvement with the story’s protagonists.

In both Goethe’s and Novalis’s novels, reading becomes the primary goal of the protagonists’ education. By contrast, Tieck presents Franz’s journey as a crucial component of his apprenticeship as a painter.¹⁴ Like the formative experiences of Wilhelm’s childhood, Heinrich’s life and experience before the journey to Augsburg are characterized by his limited knowledge about the world that he has acquired through reading: “die Welt war ihm nur aus

¹⁴ His seemingly secondary education as a reader and its importance are revealed through a systematic analysis. See chapter three.

Erzählungen bekannt” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 203). However, this does not change with the journey, as the trip, like the theater in the *Lehrjahre*, provides occasions for storytelling and reading that will continue to supplement Heinrich’s knowledge about the world and himself in the same way.

Whereas *Ofterdingen*, as an allegory of reading, most resembles the *Lehrjahre*, than its use of the oral tradition links it closest to *Sternbald*. In all three novels, however, the most formative scenes for the protagonist’s *Bildung* have been constructed around reading or storytelling from the outset. And while Goethe’s novel ends by concluding that features of orality may enhance print culture, orality works differently in the *Lehrjahre* than in the two Romantic novels. Tieck and Novalis both embed their stories in the oral tradition. Much like the storytelling on the ship to Amsterdam in *Sternbald*, therefore, Heinrich’s journey recalls the classical storytelling situation of Goethe’s *Unterhaltungen* and Boccaccio’s *Dekameron*: “Die Gesellschaft, die anfänglich aus ähnlichen Ursachen still gewesen war, fing nachgerade an aufzuwachen, und sich mit allerhand Gesprächen und Erzählungen die Zeit zu verkürzen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 205). As in Tieck’s novel, moreover, the storytelling in *Ofterdingen* serves as entertainment to pass time while the travelers are on the road. First, Heinrich’s mother, who is traveling with him, describes her native city to prepare her son for their arrival and stay in Augsburg. Her account of her hometown engages the merchants as well, and a lively discussion ensues. Kittler summarizes Heinrich’s journey as “ohne Abenteuer oder Schicksalsschläge, nur damit er ganz Ohr werden kann” (“*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß” 492).¹⁵ The implication of this distinction for the novel is that the historical setting allows Novalis to isolate the senses. Hearing is accomplished with the ears and reading with the eyes. Like *Sternbald*,

¹⁵ “‘Ganz Ohr’ sind wir nur, wenn wir nicht ‘ganz Auge’ sind” (Utz 7).

Ofterdingen uses the journey of its protagonist to rethink the oral tradition within print culture by utilizing discussion as an informing motif.

4.2 BIOGRAPHIES

Wie Heiligtümer wird eine weisere Nachkommenschaft jede Nachricht, die von den Begebenheiten der Vergangenheit handelt, aufsuchen, und selbst das Leben eines einzelnen unbedeutenden Mannes wird ihr nicht gleichgültig sein, da gewiß sich das große Leben seiner Zeitgenossenschaft darin mehr oder weniger spiegelt. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 258)

One of the major motifs of Novalis's novel is the reading of tales that offer fictional biographies, especially of poets. These biographical accounts provide examples for Heinrich for his own aspirations. As von Molnár argues, "[t]he poet can describe nothing else but the process through which he attained the level of self-consciousness that permits the world to appear as the poetically transformed phenomenon he presents it to be" (*Romantic Vision* 97). Along similar lines, Minden concludes, "[t]he poet must write about his own autobiography [...] [of], how he came to be poet" (194). However, even the biographies of ordinary people can become relevant, as they may parallel contemporary trends. As Schanze says about the Romantic novel, "Roman ist nicht zuletzt Bio-Graphie, bringt den 'Stoff' des gewöhnlichen, aber auch des ungewöhnlichen Lebens zwischen die Deckel eines Buchs" ("Leben, als Buch" 236). Novalis, who formulated the same idea in the *Vermischte Fragmenten I*: "So ist jedes Leben eine Geschichte" (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 563; Nr. 187). He reformulates and develops the same idea in

other fragments: “Ein Roman ist ein *Leben*, als Buch” (599; Nr. 22).¹⁶ As expressed in the fragments and manifested more fully in the novel, the relationship between real life and fictional narration is reciprocal. Other people’s lives shape Heinrich’s path, which in turn becomes a book. Along similar lines, Novalis’s novel explains why Heinrich should be interested in others. The merchants conclude that Heinrich should hear stories about other poets: “Es dünkt uns, Ihr habt Anlage zum Dichter. [...] Vielleicht ergötzt es Euch, einige artige Geschichten von Dichtern zu hören, die wir auf unsern Reisen erfuhren” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208-10). The merchants’ conclusion about Heinrich’s interest seems to define the theme of storytelling for the rest of the novel. Expanding upon von Molnar’s and Minden’s theses, I argue, that, as the novel makes clear from the outset, writing about his own development requires a poet-to-be to study other poets’ lives.¹⁷ More importantly, however, the interlocuted biographical accounts about poets in *Ofterdingen* conceptualize storytelling and its reception while offering Heinrich a model for his future profession, as well as for his more immediate needs as a reader.

The first biographical story that Heinrich hears comes at the beginning of the novel. It is the dream of his father in Rome, told during a casual conversation in their home. The father, seeking solitude, fled the company of his friends, only to meet an older man. They start a conversation, and he invites the lonely traveler home, where they continue their discussion and engage in storytelling. The father’s memory not only mirrors Heinrich’s dream;¹⁸ it also establishes the importance of books, reading, and storytelling:

¹⁶ Novalis elaborates on the idea in another fragment: “Das Leben soll kein uns gegebener, sondern ein von uns gemachter Roman seyn” (Vol. 2 563; Nr. 187).

¹⁷ “Der Zweck des Lesens ist also nicht die Erwerbung von großen, aber müßigen Kenntnissen, sondern eine selbstthätige, willkürliche und vernünftige Anwendung derselben” (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 85).

¹⁸ Link assigns this function not only to dreams, but also to tales, poems, and even figures: “Wie nun das Geschehen der Träume und Märchen und der beiden Gedichte auf ein bestimmtes Geschehensmodell reduzierbar ist, auf welches vorausweisender und rückblickender Bezug genommen wird, so erscheinen auch die meisten

Die Stube war voll Bücher und Altertümer. Wir gerieten in ein weitläufiges Gespräch; er erzählte mir viel von alten Zeiten, von Malern, Bildhauern und Dichtern. Noch nie hatte ich so davon reden hören. Es war mir, als sei ich in einer neuen Welt ans Land gestiegen. Er wies mir Siegelsteine und andre alte Kunstarbeiten; dann las er mir mit lebendigem Feuer herrliche Gedichte vor, und so verging die Zeit, wie ein Augenblick. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 200)

Conceptualizing books and reading so early in the novel is significant for understanding Heinrich's development as a reader. Although he has little experience with books—"Wenig Bücher waren ihm zu Gesicht gekommen" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 203)—it is noteworthy as Kuzniar remarks, that "[t]he narrator constantly alludes to Heinrich's bookish learning; indeed the world, the reader is told, was only known to Heinrich through tales" (*Delayed Endings* 104). Sometimes these tales serve to connect the wisdom of former times (*alte Zeiten*) to a new world (*neue Welt*). However, discussions about books appear to be even more important than the books themselves. Their impact on Heinrich's father in Rome, moreover, parallels the impact of the stranger's story on Heinrich, and the father's archived memories foreshadow situations that will shape the son's development as a reader. Growing up, Heinrich had read books and listened to stories in his hometown, but his father's story introduces a series of tales that he will hear and that will become the primary source of his *Bildung*. In other words, the novel starts at a point in Heinrich's life where stories expand his horizon. That is, they open up the world for him geographically and fictionally. With this, his subsequent reading situations reproduce features of the oral tradition by combining storytelling and conversations.

After hearing his father's account of his travels in Italy, Heinrich meets merchants who entertain him with stories on his way to Augsburg. During their casual conversation, he learns that the merchants have met bards on their travels and listened to their stories. This fact awakens

Romangestalten als Figuren mit vordeutender oder rückverweisender Funktion, als Prä- oder Postfiguren" (Link 165; see also 149 and 165ff.).

his interest: “‘Ihr verwandelt meine Neugierde in heiße Ungeduld,’ sagte Heinrich. ‘Ich bitte euch, erzählt mir von allen Sängern, die ihr gehört habt. Ich kann nicht genug von diesen besondern Menschen hören’” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 210). It is noteworthy that Heinrich’s heightened curiosity, which stimulates a youthful memory of bards, does not involve his reading an actual poem (“Von Gedichten ist oft erzählt worden, aber nie habe ich eins zu sehen bekommen”) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208). Rather, he wants to know more about the bards’ lives. Because bards sang and did not publish their poems and stories, this interest is deeply embedded in the oral tradition. These stories take on a special significance for Heinrich, then, since, Kuzniar suggests, “their main protagonists are poets, Novalis’s *Märchen* by themselves undoubtedly celebrate the magical power of verse” (*Delayed Endings* 110).

The first story that the merchants tell Heinrich is about a traveling poet from the time of the Greek empire. Arion, Heinrich hears, is a singer from Lesbos whose life has been threatened by robbers while en route to one of the Greek shores. Arion’s last wish is to sing his own swan song, which he hopes will create a bond between himself and his captors. Unfortunately, however, the robbers are aware of the effect that Arion’s song might have: “Sie wußten recht wohl, daß wenn sie seinen Zaubergesang hörten, ihre Herzen erweicht, und sie von Reue ergriffen werden würden” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 212). Hence they fill their ears with wax—which recalls Odysseus’s tactic in *Odyssey* and emphasizes the overwhelming power of song. Through this act of “antireception,” then, which effectively blocks the song, the robbers circumvent any possible receptive and interpretative interactions with it. Within the wider field of the printed novel, however, the narrated tale establishes Heinrich’s fetishization of the poet over the poem.

The merchants then introduce a second, and as they claim, less fantastical, story from a later period. This tale of a young poet appears more relevant to Heinrich and his future, and the

entirety of chapter three is devoted to it. It concerns a poet from a lower-class family who marries the princess of Atlantis. As the story begins, we encounter a king who has great appreciation for poetry (“Die andere [Neigung] war eine wahre Leidenschaft für die Dichtkunst und ihre Meister”) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 213-14). The descriptions of the monarch at the beginning of the tale satnd juxtaposed to the depictions of the robbers in the merchants’ first story. We learn, for example, that the king has been an active reader since youth. He not only owns a library in many languages, but he regularly hosts poets and singers at his court. Heinrich learns, “Er ward nicht müde, ihren Gesängen zuzuhören, und vergaß oft die wichtigsten Angelegenheiten, ja die Bedürfnisse des Lebens über einem neuen, hinreißenden Gesange” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 214). The king, it appears, is an obsessive and insatiable listener (i.e. reader), who often neglects his official duties while reading or listening to stories. Not surprisingly, his daughter is educated and also well-read, so much so, that her mind (“Seele”) is compared to “ein zartes Lied” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 214). In fact, the daughter also likes to sing and often repeats songs she has heard while riding her horse in the nearby forest, where she then accidentally meets the young poet and his father. As her visits to the young man become regular, they sing together and engage in didactic discussions. Gradually, we learn, the princess poeticizes the young man’s scientific knowledge with her otherworldly song, and he teaches her about the natural harmony of the cosmos. This exchange miraculously endows the youth with musical capacity.¹⁹ In this mutual exchange, which allows both characters take on the roles of storyteller and listener, teacher and student, the young man finds an intellectual partner in the princess.

¹⁹ In the introduction to the *Morphologische Hefte*, Goethe talks about the origins of science in poetry, as well as the need to return science to its lyrical origin: “Man vergaß daß Wissenschaft sich aus Poesie entwickelt habe, man bedachte nicht daß, nach einem Umschwung von Zeiten, beide sich wieder freundlich, zu beiderseitigem Vorteil, auf höherer Stelle, gar wohl wieder begegnen könnten” (*FA*, Vol. 1/24, 420). See also “Die Erscheinungen des Wandels und Umwandels organischer Geschöpfe hatten mich mächtig ergriffen, Einbildungskraft und Natur schienen hier mit einander zu wetteifern” (413).

Although they belong to different classes, they are presented as intellectual and emotional equals. Both have similar educational backgrounds, and both show great appreciation for poetry and the sciences (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 220-21). Following their feelings, they decide to withdraw from society together. The disappearance of the princess causes great sadness at court. However, the life and imminent return of the couple becomes the subject of a legend, which is spread through the oral tradition. The reciprocal relationship of reading and being read—as in Goethe’s *Werther*—is further developed in the story. The young poet, who becomes the princess’s husband, announces her return by singing a song to the court that tells their story and foreshadows their future.

In this kind of foreshadowing, *Ofterdingen*, like *Sternbald* before, departs from the *Lehrjahre*. Unlike Goethe, both Tieck and Novalis incorporate reading situations into their novels through which the protagonists recognize their future selves by reading (or listening to) stories that mirror, or even shape, their later development.²⁰ By contrast, Wilhelm reads his own “Lehrjahre” at the end of the novel, when he is presented with the scroll that tells his life story, and only after many unproductive attempts to recognize himself in other readings. Thus, he is compelled by the text not only to recognize himself in his reading, but also to reflect on the narrated self-representation that he has found. By contrast, *Sternbald* and *Ofterdingen* adopt reflexive moments as their starting points. Yet Tieck and Novalis use these embedded stories to mirror their protagonists’ lives differently, as Kahn has observed: “The three so-called ‘Märchen’ are interwoven into the fabric of the story to a much higher degree than the one story in Tieck’s novel” (52). That is to say, unlike *Sternbald*, *Ofterdingen* makes this kind of reflexive reading experience almost exclusive in Heinrich’s development. Furthermore, the stories show

²⁰ “In geistreichen Büchern lesen wir uns selbst, wenn wir Verstand haben: sie antworten uns auf alles, was wir zu wissen begehren” (Bergk, *Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 3).

increasing similarity with Heinrich's life and thus prepare him for the moment when he reads his own life story. Thus, as Heinrich moves from one text to another, he finds the same kind of experience in each reading, which in turn enables him to identify a model for his own path through life:

Schon oft habe ich von Dichtern und Sängern sprechen gehört, und habe noch nie einen gesehn. Ja, ich kann mir nicht einmal einen Begriff von ihrer sonderbaren Kunst machen, und doch habe ich eine große Sehnsucht davon zu hören. Es ist mir, als würde ich manches besser verstehen, was jetzt nur dunkle Ahnung in mir ist. [...] Doch meinte er [Heinrichs Lehrer] immer, es sei eine edle Kunst, der ich mich ganz ergeben würde, wenn ich sie einmal kennen lernte. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208-9)

Heinrich's interest in the lives of poets, awakened by stories about them, helps him to know what he wants to read. Thus, he discovers a kind of intensive reading that is maintained by and part of the extensive mode. Even though he does not return to the same text over and over, he looks repeatedly for an identical experience when reading something new (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 123). Heinrich only wants to hear about bards and their lives in new stories. Not until chapter five, when he listens to the song of the old miner, does he realize that other kinds of reading are also possible. It is the first time that he feels the urge to hear something twice ("Er ließ es [das Lied des Alten] sich wiederholen") (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 250). As an exception to the rule, this occasion helps emphasize Heinrich's characteristic mode of reading as extensive.

In this context, additional stories and discussions are occasionally mixed among the stories that foreshadow or reflect Heinrich's life. These other stories expose the extensive reader Heinrich to new kinds of tales to reveal an insatiable reader behind his shy manners.²¹ They also allow for reflections on his reading behavior: "Heinrich hörte mit großer Aufmerksamkeit den

²¹ Kuzniar notes Heinrich's quality as reader: "Heinrich, for example, embodies the insatiable, open-minded, and hence pliable reader" ("Reassessing" 83), but she does not investigate its implications for the novel.

neuen Erzählungen zu” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 230). Comments on his reading behavior like this testify to his active engagement.

Heinrich pays close attention to every new story he hears, and every new story engages his vivid imagination. Thus, a song about crusades has a strong emotional effect on him—“Heinrichs ganze Seele war in Aufruhr” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 233)—and the images of the poem, including the sepulcher, the cross, and the sea, acquire life in his mind’s eyes. Likewise, Zulima’s song and story move him deeply, as does the story of the old miner: “Heinrichen erfreuten die Reden des alten Mannes ungemein, und er war sehr geneigt noch mehr von ihm zu hören” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 243). After the miner tells the story of how he came to his profession, we see different audience reactions. Most just join a conversation about the dangers of the profession. But Heinrich wants to hear more in the hope of discovering similarities to his own future as a poet. He is an attentive listener and insatiable reader, we learn—“Heinrichen gefiel das Lied ungemein, und er bat den Alten, ihm noch eins mitzuteilen”) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 248)—and his active participation prompts the old man to continue and elaborate his story and to sing songs.

The ensuing discussion, which opens the poetic new world of the imagination for Heinrich, serves as a final preparation for his encounter with his fictionalized self.

Die Worte des Alten hatten eine versteckte Tapetentür in ihm geöffnet. Er sah sein kleines Wohnzimmer dicht an einen erhabenen Münster gebaut, aus dessen steinernem Boden die ernste Vorwelt emporstieg, während von der Kuppel die klare fröhliche Zukunft in goldnen Engelskindern ihr singend entgegenschwebte. Gewaltige Klänge bebten in den silbernen Gesang, und zu den weiten Toren traten alle Kreaturen herein, von denen jede ihre innere Natur in einer einfachen Bitte und in einer eigentümlichen Mundart vernehmlich aussprach. Wie wunderte er sich, daß ihm diese klare, seinem Dasein schon unentbehrliche Ansicht so lange fremd geblieben war. Nun übersah er auf einmal alle seine Verhältnisse mit der weiten Welt um ihn her; fühlte, was er durch sie geworden und was sie ihm werden würde, und begriff alle die seltsamen Vorstellungen und Anregungen, die er schon oft in ihrem Anschauen gespürt hatte. Die Erzählung der Kaufleute von

dem Jünglinge, der die Natur so emsig betrachtete, und der Eidam des Königs wurde, kam ihm wieder zu Gedanken, und tausend andere Erinnerungen seines Lebens knüpften sich von selbst an einen zauberischen Faden. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 252)

The description of Heinrich's reading corresponds to the understanding of visual and textual reception in the Middle Ages.²² At the same time, the miner's story symbolically represents of Heinrich's reception of stories. First, we can see the power of reading, as stories lead to unknown places through hidden passage ways (*versteckte Tapetentür* [secret tapestry door]). However, this apparently unknown terrain is also closely connected to what is initially known and represented by Heinrich's own little room. Next, the little room is juxtaposed to a lofty cathedral, indicating that in reading one has to work out contradictions, as the sublime building contrasts sharply with Heinrich's world. The image of the cathedral, moreover, also alludes to the physical appearance of a book. As Bland argues, the architecture of buildings and books showed striking similarities in the Middle Ages, in part because the arts were more interconnected and influenced by the clergy. Bland explains that changes in architecture—from the heavy Romanesque style to the lighter Gothic—affected book illuminations similarly (58). Thus, comparing the reading experience to a grand cathedral foreshadows Heinrich's encounter with an illuminated book shortly after this scene.²³

The *silberne Gesang* (silver singing) of Heinrich's vision represents all stories available to him, and the room of his childhood, his story-shaped consciousness. Furthermore, the silver song is emblematic of the product of imagination. *Silver* recalls the moonlight, which is a

²² "Auch Sprache und Literatur waren und sind also in diesem Sinne als Medien von Bildern anzusehen. Die Dichter vertrauten von alters her darauf, dass die poetischen Bilder, die sie zunächst in ihrer Imagination entwerfen, ehe sie auf Papyrus, Pergament oder Papier gelangen, später von ihren Hörern und Lesern in ähnlicher Gestalt wieder abgerufen werden können" (Wandhoff 10).

²³ Goethe characterizes the Strasburg cathedral as a language edifice, a "Babelgedanke" in his "Von deutscher Baukunst" (1773) (*FA*, Vol. 1/18, 110).

reflected light, and *Gesang* stands for collectivity. Together, they stand for the figurative reworking of the world in poetry. The miner's story thus employs a pictorial language to recall the images in Heinrich's mind.²⁴ The scene sets apart the text and poetological reflection by using two different characters: the miner producing the text and Heinrich receiving and then reproducing it in his imagination. Such engagement with and reflection upon writing became characteristic for the early Romantic period. However, the miner's text construction is not simply imagistic. It is also audible. The songs come together in *gewaltige Klänge* (mighty tones), revealing their power as they are united in the room.

The individual stories that enter Heinrich's life are also embodied by the *Kreaturen* (creatures). The creatures speak clearly and in different languages (*eigentümliche Mundart*), a prefiguring of the fact that Heinrich's own biography will be written in Provençal, a dialect spoken mainly in southern France, which, as a language unfamiliar to Heinrich, calls for translation.²⁵ Despite the overpowering image of the creatures, Heinrich gains a clear vision of how his stories fit together, including the stories told by the merchants, which come to Heinrich's mind and find their places in the order of stories (*zauberischer Faden*—magic thread). Thus even before he finds a mirror image of himself in the picture book, the miner's story serves to synthesize Heinrich's reading experiences. Bringing different types of reception together, it connects Heinrich's earlier experiences in oral culture to the ones awaiting him in print.

²⁴ Helmut Schneider claims, this kind of language in literary writings was emerging around 1800: "Die literarischen Entwürfe um 1800 reagieren auf die historischen Bilderstürme demgemäß mit neuen, sprachlich konstituierten Bildkonzepten, in denen die Bildlichkeit immer zugleich poetologisch reflektiert wird" (9).

²⁵ The creatures' languages and the Provençal book also represent the emerging use of vernacular languages in print in the High Middle Ages.

The merchants' stories about great poets, other stories and songs about old times, the song and story of Zulima, and the story of the miner all serve as preludes to Heinrich's encounter with his own life-story in the fifth chapter. While visiting the hermit in his cave, Heinrich finds an illuminated book, written in Provençal, in which he recognizes himself (and not just a fictional poet), as well as other important figures from his life. The hermit who lives in the cave of course represents the solitary reader. But even before the group visiting the cave sees him, he is introduced by a song. This acoustic introduction connects him to the oral tradition and its materialization of texts through voice. However, we quickly learn that the hermit reads and collects books, which further links him with print culture. In fact, he has chosen to live in the cave, because it provides a secluded environment conducive to solitary reading (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 256-57).

In his discussion about history, the hermit criticizes the reading habits of the younger generation:

Die Jugend liest die Geschichte nur aus Neugier, wie ein unterhaltendes Märchen; dem reiferen Alter wird sie eine himmlische tröstende und erbauende Freundin, die ihn durch ihre weisen Gespräche sanft zu einer höheren, umfassenderen Laufbahn vorbereitet, und mit der unbekannten Welt ihn in faßlichen Bildern bekannt macht. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 258)

This critique of course recalls a form of reading that Tieck had promoted in his novel. While youth is often driven by its superficial curiosity and desire for entertainment, the older generation, schooled in the oral tradition, conceptualizes tales as conversations that enhance their reading experience. The hermit's reasoning also recalls the opposition of intensive and extensive reading. The curiosity of the younger generation facilitates extensive reading, which is driven by a need to be entertained. By contrast, the reading behavior of the older generation, described as *heavenly*, *edifying*, and *comprehensive*, can be associated with intensive reading.

The scene prior to the hermit's discourse on history depicts other aspects of reading. Although Kuzniar argues that "Heinrich's viewing of the Provençal book does not induce a change in his development" (*Delayed Endings* 106), it marks an important stage in his conceptualization as a reader and in Novalis's commentary on contemporary trends. First, Heinrich browses through the books in the hermit's collection:

Der Einsiedler zeigte ihnen seine Bücher. Es waren alte Historien und Gedichte. Heinrich blätterte in den großen schöngemalten Schriften; die kurzen Zeilen der Verse, die Überschriften, einzelne Stellen, und die saubern Bilder, die hier und da, wie verkörperte Worte, zum Vorschein kamen, um die Einbildungskraft des Lesers zu unterstützen, reizten mächtig seine Neugierde. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 264)

Interestingly, Heinrich initially focuses on the visual and graphic characteristics of the page. He examines the illuminations in the books, the lengths of the lines, and the titles. Then he reads bits and pieces. The description of the illuminations brings the fine arts and literature together. Although image and the text are dependent on each other, they are also separate. The illuminations are described as embodied words whose function is to highlight parts of the text and stimulate the reader's imagination.

Throughout the novel, Novalis separates and juxtaposes two forms of literary reception: listening through the ear and reading through the eye. Such separation of the senses, especially between the eye and the ear stems from the Enlightenment.²⁶ The division becomes more pronounced with Romanticism, as an interest emerges in oral culture, spoken language, and music.²⁷ And while Novalis explores new forms of orality in the novel, in his *Fragments* he assigns the eye a crucial role in perception: "Unser sämtliches Wahrnehmungsvermögen gleicht dem Auge" (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 415; Nr 9). He asserts in another fragment, moreover, that the

²⁶ Utz claims that Lessing, typical for his time period, is divided between the eye and the ear (44).

²⁷ "Der urromantische Identitätsgedanke [...], die Überzeugung also von der ursprünglichen Einheit aller Dinge [...] bedingt, auf die Kunsttheorie übertragen, das Streben zur Verschmelzung der verschiedenen Künste: Dichtung, Bild und Musik" (Langen 283).

senses are not perfect: “Es liegt nur an der Schwäche unserer Organe, und der Selbstberührung, daß wir uns nicht in einer Feenwelt erblicken” (564; Nr 195). Clearly, some capacity must be engaged to correct the weaknesses of the senses, which according to Lessing already point to one “sense,” the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) (Utz 44-45). As Lessing argues the imagination plays an even more important role in literature (*Poesie*) than in the visual arts (45): “Bei dem Dichter ist ein Gewand kein Gewand; es verdeckt nichts; unsere Einbildungskraft sieht überall hindurch” (Lessing 58-59). The imagination, according to Lessing, turns reception into a productive process (Utz 45, 177).

From the scene in the cave, it becomes clear that visual (and print) media can challenge the imagination as acoustic media cannot. Thus, when Heinrich encounters the printed book in chapter five, the illustrations engage his imagination in much the same way that for Lessing paintings engage the viewer:

Dasjenige [Augenblick] aber nur allein ist fruchtbar, was der Einbildungskraft freies Spiel läßt. Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir hinzu denken können. Je mehr wir dazu denken, desto mehr müssen wir zu sehen glauben. [...] Wenn Laokoon also seufzet, so kann ihn die Einbildungskraft schreien hören. (*Laokoon* 32)

As the images engage the reader’s imagination, they also awaken Heinrich’s curiosity to read more: “Heinrich war sehr bekümmert, und wünschte nichts sehnlicher, als das Buch lesen zu können” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 265). Just as importantly, Heinrich’s reading corresponds to a prescription in Bergk, a contemporary of Novalis, that would guide reading: “Das Erste, was man beim Lesen thun muß, ist, das Feuer der Einbildungskraft anzufachen, um den Vorstellungen Lebendigkeit einzuhauchen, und das Ganze sich anschaulich darstellen und es mit Reflexion überschauen zu können” (*Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 61). For both Lessing and Bergk, the imagination enables literary reception to become productive. Lessing describes this process

as an infinite oscillation between the physical reception of seeing and its effect in thinking, while Bergk separates it into an inner visualization and subsequent reflection. The process also corresponds to the Romantic idea of cognitive perception, however, which Novalis describes in the following fragment: “Um sich selbst zu begreifen muß das Ich ein anderes ihm gleiches Wesen sich vorstellen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 107; Nr. 3). When Heinrich recognizes his own image in the illuminated book, he experiences this process as well.

It is noteworthy that Novalis’s novel talks about these cognitive processes with bodily metaphors. Heinrich’s reading, for example, is compared to eating when he does not feel satisfied: “Heinrich konnte sich nicht *satt sehen*, und hätte nichts mehr gewünscht, als bei dem Einsiedler, der ihn unwiderstehlich anzog, zu bleiben, und von ihm über diese Bücher unterrichtet zu werden” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 264, my emphasis). Here Heinrich’s appetite is described as visual. However, it will become textual in the second half of the novel (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 329), when Heinrich feels he could spend a long time in the cave reading the books in the hermit’s library, but also acknowledges that reading would not satisfy his needs for learning. Heinrich recognizes that a teacher is necessary and thus turns to the Hermit to guide him, through conversation, past books.²⁸

In this state of mind, Heinrich encounters a book that depicts his own life:

Endlich fiel ihm ein Buch in die Hände, das in einer fremden Sprache geschrieben war, die ihm einige Ähnlichkeit mit der lateinischen und italienischen zu haben schien. Er hätte sehnlichst gewünscht, die Sprache zu kennen, denn das Buch gefiel ihm vorzüglich, ohne daß er eine Silbe davon verstand. Es hatte keinen Titel, doch fand er noch beim Suchen einige Bilder. Sie dünkten ihm ganz wunderbar bekannt, und wie er recht zusah, entdeckte er seine eigene Gestalt ziemlich kenntlich unter den Figuren. Er erschrak und glaubte zu träumen, aber beim wiederholten Ansehn konnte er nicht mehr an der vollkommenen Ähnlichkeit zweifeln. Er traute kaum seinen Sinnen, als er bald auf einem Bilde die Höhle, den Einsiedler und den Alten neben sich entdeckte. Allmählich fand er

²⁸ This recognition connects to the oral communication theme of the novel.

auf den andern Bildern die Morgenländerin, seine Eltern, den Landgrafen und die Landgräfin von Thüringen, seinen Freund den Hofkaplan, und manche andere seiner Bekannten; doch waren ihre Kleidungen verändert und schienen aus einer andern Zeit zu sein. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 264-65)

Most likely inspired by the passage in the *Lehrjahre* where Wilhelm receives the scroll as his initiation to the Society of the Tower (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 606), this scene provides Heinrich with a special reading experience. Ironically, he does not understand the language of the document and cannot make sense of the printed text. Kuzniar claims that he cannot gain self-knowledge through the book, because he cannot interpret either the images or the text (“Reassessing” 83). However, I see Heinrich’s reading differently. The text is opaque in one way, but the illuminations open it up in another. Despite the language difficulty, the book becomes a significant document in Heinrich’s development. Its illustrations are embodied words, and he finds access to their content despite its opacity. Complete self-knowledge may not be obtainable through images alone, but self-recognition, as a first step to self-knowledge, can come as much through images as through language. Nevertheless, for recognition to occur, the illustrations must be linked to narratives, which means, they must tell Heinrich’s story in broad outline, even if without words. In contrast to his reception of the other stories, Heinrich’s self recognition here is a surprising, even shocking, dreamlike event. While he typically sought to hear about bards, he was not prepared to see himself in a story. He must, therefore, repeatedly look at the pictures to confirm his first impression. And after multiple viewings, he has no doubt about the similarity. The images confirm Heinrich’s recognition more effectively than would reading words alone.

The capacity of the pictures to tell a story here compensates for Heinrich’s inability to understand the book’s strange words.²⁹ Because they have a narrative design, moreover, he is

²⁹ Heinrich’s recognition of himself, as well as of important stations and figures from his own life in the pictures, corresponds to Bergk’s description of books: “Bücher besitzen eine magische Kraft: sie sind Geisterbanner, machen

able to recognize his own life story. Heinrich's experience, therefore, simultaneously recalls the tradition of emblem books, which combined text and image,³⁰ and anticipates the modern reading of comic books and graphic narratives.³¹ An important feature of reading comics,³² according to Gundermann, is "das Erkennen des Ganzen, obwohl nur Teile davon wahrnehmbar sind." The comic book reader sees series of individual images as a closed world and can construct a story through the images (68). According to Breihaupt, the capacity of images to tell a story does not begin with comics, as the readability of pictures was at the center of the aesthetic debates in the late eighteenth century that were initiated by Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766) (37). *Ofterdingen*, I want to suggest, takes up Lessing's critique of pure visual perception in order to show that the issue is more complex. When Heinrich recognizes himself in images, the depiction of his figure and his reorganization of past events secure a sequential, or narrative character, for the illustrations.

Ofterdingen contributes to the debate about the reception of visual and textual images by emphasizing their similarities. According to Lessing, a painter must depict the moment from which the sequence of events can be derived (Breihaupt 43). In the investigation of the two art forms, Lessing juxtaposes one painting with a series of images ("Bilderfolge"), i.e. a story

das unsichtbare sichtbar, das Tode lebendig, das Künftige und Vergangene gegenwärtig [...] und zeigen uns den Weg zum wahren Glücke" (*Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 9).

³⁰ Visual culture shaped books and their readers. Already in their early history, books were not merely textual artifacts; rather places where text and image coexisted. Readers thus had to develop strategies for the reception of images and texts. Emblem books, as examples of the baroque dictum *ut pictura poesis* were especially noteworthy in this regard. They originated from the typological thinking of the Middle Ages (Gerhard Hoffmeister 137) and their treatment of text and image goes back to the medieval concept of the close relationship between the word and its meaning (Ohly 4-5).

³¹ Chute addresses the terminological confusion regarding comics and introduces the term *graphic narrative*, a broader term that allows for the inclusion of both longer fiction and other than fiction (452-53). In addition, scholars have traced "the rich tradition of the word-and-image" to the Middle Ages, connecting the genre of comics to Medieval illuminated books and tapestries or to the later picture stories of the nineteenth century (Chute 452; see also Gundermann 12-15).

³² "In an interview for *Time Magazine*, Art Spiegelman had this to say: 'But I spell it *c-o-m-i-x*, so you are not confused by the fact that comics have to be funny, as in comic. You think it is a co-mix of words and pictures'" (Bongco 51).

("Handlung"). He then deduces an oppositional relationship between the spatial structure of the fine arts and the temporal structure of poetry (Schröder 319). Images are, according to Lessing, "Figuren und Farben in dem Raume," while poetry is "artikulierte Töne in der Zeit" (*Laokoon* 116). With the scene in the cave, Novalis complicates this binary opposition by using a sequence of images in the illuminated book. Because Heinrich is unable to read the text, the relationship between text and image cannot be investigated. By adding a temporal component to the pictures, however, Novalis assigns a narrative character to them, which is in line with Lessing's description of poetry: "Nichts nötigt hiernächst den Dichter sein Gemälde in einen einzigen Augenblick zu concentrieren. Er nimmt jede seiner Handlungen, wenn er will, bei ihrem Ursprung auf, und führet sie durch alle mögliche Abänderungen bis zu ihrer Endschaft" (*Laokoon* 35). The illuminated book can connect the highlights of Heinrich's past, present, and future life so that, when taken together, the pictures put the single image that is being read into a meaningful narrative sequence.

The illuminations in the book, therefore, offer Heinrich the possibility of instantly recognizing himself in a process of identification. However, there are gaps between the pictures that might be filled by the text in a language unfamiliar to Heinrich. Likewise, there are also differences between Heinrich's own life and the life of his fictional self. Accordingly, the clothing of the characters and the setting in the pictures suggest an age before Heinrich was born. As a consequence, he feels distant from his mirror image in the book. But if Heinrich's life had happened once before, then the book could be a biography of his former self. In any case, as a *mise en abyme*, the scene depicts Heinrich as a reader looking at a representation of himself in an historical era. One scene in the book, in fact, is *this very scene*: it shows a Heinrich of an earlier age looking at himself reading a book, and so on. But if he could become a book in a previous

life, the process can also be reversed and the scene turned the other way: *Ofterdingen*'s reader could be looking at a character reading the story of Ofterdingen, who has been cast in an earlier era. By reading the book, Heinrich recognizes that life can repeat its stories, and fictions can become real. Furthermore, the complex relationship between fiction and reality is also emphasized through the graphic narrative of the illuminated book. No single image is able to tell a story by itself, Breihaupt argues, but the repetition of figures and elements may produce connections between images (37). Accordingly, Heinrich's portrayal in each picture is not a discrete sign referring to his life; it also secures the sequential character of all the illustrations, making them into a narrative. Because some of the pictures depict Heinrich's future, their meaning and referents will only become clear to him as he gathers additional experiences, i.e. as the future becomes present and then past. For example, when Heinrich meets Klingsohr, he immediately recognizes the poet from the book, which the encounter, therefore, mirrors. Or conversely, when figures from the past, like himself, his parents, or Zulima, appear in the book, the reading experience mirrors life. In other words, Heinrich's worldly and reading experiences overlap.

Although the images in the illuminated book, as visual texts, allow Heinrich to gain access to the outline of his story, he recognizes that actually reading the words would enhance his self-understanding: "Heinrich war sehr bekümmert, und wünschte nichts sehnlicher, als das Buch lesen zu können, und vollständig zu besitzen" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 265). His response to the book makes clear that it must also be understood as verbal text—that is, as literature—and not just as a collection of images.³³ Furthermore, Heinrich's desire to read and even to own the book puts reading and possession on the same level. This desire implies the shortcomings of an oral

³³ Compare to Eckel's description of Tieck's *Herzensgenießungen*: "Die Texte machen [...] klar, daß sie als *Literatur* verstanden sein wollen und daß sie ihren eigenen Status deutlich reflektieren"(216).

culture, where books are inaccessible. In turn, this implication qualifies what I have analyzed as the novel's interest in promoting orality.

With this scene, the novel also asserts once more that biographies can be relevant for future generations (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 258). Heinrich's life becomes readable even before he completes it.

Er sah sein Ebenbild in verschiedenen Lagen. Gegen das Ende kam er sich größer und edler vor. Die Gitarre ruhte in seinen Armen, und die Landgräfin reichte ihm einen Kranz. [...] Die letzten Bilder waren dunkel und unverständlich; doch überraschten ihn einige Gestalten seines Traumes mit dem innigsten Entzücken; der Schluß des Buches schien zu fehlen. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 265)

This fictional, but fragmentary, completion of Heinrich's life will be essential to his development as a poet. According to Novalis, no other story could complete his *Bildung* but his own: "Was bildet den Menschen, als seine *Lebensgeschichte*?" (*Schriften*, Vol. 3, 586; Nr. 214). However, it is also important that the book and Heinrich's life remain fragmentary. Even the missing title emphasizes the unfinished character of the book. The fact that his encounter with his own story is only partially understood³⁴ parallels the fact that Heinrich has encountered the story in the midst of his own *Bildung*. His development as a reader and poet is still unfinished. Whereas reading the scroll and recognizing himself in it concluded Wilhelm Meister's education as a reader, for Heinrich recognizing his past and future self in the book³⁵ does not end his education, but rather confirms the direction of his aspirations. This interpretation is indicated by the hermit's brief summary of the illuminated book: "Soviel ich weiß, ist es ein Roman von den wunderbaren Schicksalen eines Dichters, worin die Dichtkunst in ihren mannigfachen Verhältnissen dargestellt und gepriesen wird" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 265). The contradiction between

³⁴ Even if he understood the language, he would be unable to read the entire book, as it is incomplete.

³⁵ Heinrich recognizes Klingsohr, the poet whom he has never met before, based on the pictures when he arrives in Augsburg: "Unter der Gesellschaft war Heinrichen ein Mann aufgefallen, den er in jenem Buche oft an seiner Seite gesehen zu haben glaubte" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 269-70).

the impact of the book on Heinrich and the fact that he does not understand its language is thus also a commentary about reading. Although images allow quick access to the broad shape of his story, Heinrich understands that much more work will be required before he can actually read (the book). The scene thus suggests that despite the proliferation in book production and the rise of the number of readers at Novalis's time, we should not think that books can be read quickly or without effort to understand the complex layering of stories.

Link emphasizes that no other story within *Ofterdingen* identifies with Heinrich's story more clearly than this illuminated book in Provençal (168).³⁶ Specifically, the scene gains the attention of readers by highlighting what happens between Heinrich and the book, i.e., by considering the process of reading and reception. At the same time, as Kuzniar emphasizes, the author's "remarks [on reading] are neither prescriptive nor descriptive. On the contrary, Novalis states that there is no such thing as a commonly accepted reading. Reading is a free activity; no one can prescribe how and what a person should read" (*Delayed Endings* 124).

While Novalis does not provide a recipe for reading, however, he does suggest what reading could mean. We can see these suggestions in the conceptualization of Heinrich as a reader, in the descriptions of his reading behavior, and in his reactions to stories throughout the novel. Like Heinrich, good readers respond emotionally to texts. Furthermore, modern readers read to recreate previous reading experiences, as Heinrich also does early in the novel, when he expresses the wish to hear more about bards. And lastly books offer experiences that can help shape readers' lives. We can, therefore, say that the scene in the cave does not offer a particular reading strategy. Rather, it privileges the intimate relationship that a reader develops with books.

³⁶ "Wieder treffen wir auf eine gleichsam summarischen Formel des ganzen Werks, das diesmal im Bild des Buches kaum verhüllt entgegentritt" (Link 169). She understands this scene as directing the readers' attention to the production of art: "das Bewußtsein des Lesers [wird] auf das poetische Verfahren und auf die Tatsache des realen Gemachtwerdens der Kunst verwiesen" (169). See also Kuzniar ("Reassessing" 83).

The reading of the illuminated book marks the climax of “Die Erwartung,” the first part of the novel. It also represents Novalis’s exploration of the newly emerging *Bildlichkeit* (figuration). Like *Sternbald*, then, *Ofterdingen* investigates the relationships between images and literature,³⁷ but it uses images more sparingly than Tieck.³⁸ In Heinrich’s most crucial reading experience, however, Novalis separates text and image in order to highlight the role of visuality in reading. He achieves this by juxtaposing Heinrich’s reception of the miner’s story to the illuminated book.³⁹ In this connection, *Ofterdingen* shows how visuality had changed. The sparing use of pictorial media in the novel sharply contrasts with the imagery produced in Heinrich’s active imagination. As we witnessed in the scene in the cave, visual texts cannot substitute for verbal texts. However, verbal texts can stimulate the imagination to produce images. With this, Novalis’s novel addresses what Gerhard Neumann and Günter Oesterle call “eine Medienkrise ersten Ranges” (9). This crisis, they explain, emerged from the newly developed scientific and artistic media, which in turn greatly affected and restructured both literary reception and cognition. Romantic authors were interested in crossing the frontier of visual, acoustic, and print signals in the cognitive process (9-10). The role of images changed with the proliferation of print, which made them more accessible along with printed texts too. However, Gerhard Neumann and Günter Oesterle add, for Novalis and other Romantic thinkers, the reception of sound, in addition to image and text, also became central (12). Thus, the scene in

³⁷ “Tatsächlich trägt die romantische Literatur mit wachem Bewußtsein die Krise der Bildlichkeit in sich selbst aus. [...] *Bildersturm und Bilderflut sind hier immer wieder nur die zwei Seiten eines einzigen Vorgangs, die Vermehrung der Bilder stellt nur das Symptom einer Krise des Bildprinzips überhaupt dar*” (Eckel 214-15).

³⁸ “Die Klage über den Verlust verbindlicher Bilder schlägt dabei immer wieder um in einen geheimen Jubel über den Gewinn neuer literarischer Möglichkeiten” (Eckel 215).

³⁹ Helmut Schneider describes this kind of juxtaposition at the turn of the nineteenth century as follows: “Dem für den Prozeß der *gesellschaftlichen* Moderne konstitutiven Bildermangel antwortet die *kulturelle* Moderne nicht allein mit einer in sich reflektierten Wiederaufnahme der Bilder, sondern mit einer ästhetischen Bilderflut” (10).

the cave not only explores the opposition of visual and verbal texts, but also the differences between oral and print communication.

The scene offers contrasts to situations previously embedded in orality. Although Novalis's novel makes a case for turning to orality as a way to find an original voice, the cave-scene recognizes the irreversible changes that the proliferation of print media had brought. Writing and print, even if not understood, can convey content in a way that speaking and storytelling cannot. Accordingly, Novalis first addresses the tension between the transient act of speech and the graphically durable written utterance. Heinrich depends on his memory to recall the stories he has heard; only on rare occasions can he ask the storyteller to repeat his tale. By contrast, and despite his inability to read the word in the illuminated book, books are not transient like the spoken word. Lessing describes this difference in *Laokoon*: "Dem Auge bleiben die betrachteten Teile beständig gegenwärtig; es kann sie abermals und abermals überlaufen: für das Ohr hingegen sind die vernommenen Teile verloren, wann sie nicht in dem Gedächtnisse zurückbleiben" (124). Additionally, while the aural reception of a story, including the number of repetitions that occurs, is determined by the storyteller, the reader of print media controls the reception of what is being read. Heinrich can determine the time he spends with a book and can look at its pictures as often he wishes. Moreover, his desire to own the book implies a desire to be able to return to read it any time. Because print media can preserve and archive content, he does not need to rely on his memory alone.

So it is significant that the exploration of orality continues when Heinrich next meets Klingsohr, the poet and his future father-in-law. In fact, his training by Klingsohr assumes that Heinrich will be educated within the oral tradition. However, a critique of Novalis's own time lies behind this historically authentic representation. Thus, while *Ofterdingen* appears to favor

orality even more emphatically than Goethe's and Tieck's novels, the figure of Klingsohr complicates the picture. Part of him, we learn, is deeply embedded in orality, while another part is educated in print culture: on the one hand, he is well known as a storyteller within his community; on the other, he owns a library, which he opens up for Heinrich.⁴⁰ Novalis's choice to place Heinrich in the oral tradition as a representation of the modern reader allows him to combine speaking and hearing with modern reading behaviors such as extensive reading. Apprenticing Heinrich to Klingsohr is Novalis's way of advocating for his preferred method of learning both to read and to write.

Many of the scenes in which Heinrich listens to stories or reads books happen in a communal setting. As Maura Nolan asserts, a community shares "a common discourse [...] or set of practices [...] that shapes the various readings and misreadings of the texts produced and consumed by the group" (1). In *Sternbald*, we can observe the dynamics of such a community on a number of occasions. But in *Ofterdingen*, Heinrich is often differentiated from his communities as reader. This can already be seen in the opening pages of the novel, when he tries to retell a story he has just heard from a stranger. Although he shares the actual storytelling experience with others, he feels lonely ("das kann und wird keiner verstehn" [*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 195]), because he wants to discuss its content and effect on himself. But Heinrich does not think anyone would understand him. Frequently, he does not share the discourse of the community with whom he shares a listening experience. His communities are not intellectual, and Heinrich is shown in solitude in these scenes. In this way, Novalis's novel separates the individual reader from the

⁴⁰ Kittler claims that "new methods of alphabetization are developed in order to make the acquisition of writing and reading as easy as that of speaking and hearing. The result is a capability of silent and internalized reading that need not struggle anymore with the very materiality of letters" ("A Discourse on Discourse" 161).

community. These scenes act as metaphors for contemporary reading behaviors, focusing the novel on the solitary process, even if reading itself occurs in a communal setting.

The pattern that casts Heinrich as a solitary reader in the middle of a community is apparent throughout the novel. For example, when the merchants tell the tale of Arion to the traveling group, he is singled out as the only traveler who has a conversation with them. Even though there are others traveling with Heinrich, they do not participate in the conversation, nor do we know whether or not they even listen to it. It is therefore clear that the merchants tell the story specifically to satisfy Heinrich's interest (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208-9). However, his reception of Arion's story is not provided, which can be interpreted as a sign of his solitude. Heinrich's reading does not easily become part of the discourse of a community. So, his reaction is not even shared with real readers in either case. Likewise, when Heinrich hears the merchants' second tale, or when he reads the illuminated book in the cave, we find him even more emphatically disconnected from the community. Although he enters the cave with a group to converse with the hermit, he separates himself from it to spend time with the book: "Der Alte war dazu bereit [weitere Höhlen mit der Gruppe zu besuchen], und der Einsiedler, der die Freude merkte, die Heinrich an seinen Büchern hatte, veranlaßte ihn, zurückzubleiben, und sich während dieser Zeit weiter unter denselben umzusehn" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 264). Not only is Heinrich physically alone when actually reading the book, but his experience with it is also solitary. Finally, the novel does not include Heinrich's response to Klingsohr's tale, a crucial scene concluding *Ofterdingen*'s first part. This parallels similar omissions earlier in the novel.

While Heinrich's lives in a community that hears the story along with him, he is typically presented as a reader who is without community. Thus, the phenomenological experience of his reading stands opposed to how the novel represents his life: although he frequently appears

within a group, he listens to stories in solitude. Wellbery's description of primordial orality can help us understand the mechanism of this contradiction of being lonely in a community. According to Wellbery, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, a new orality produced "a singularization of collectivity" (191). The group here became an individual subject. In Heinrich's case, however, the individual subject leaves the group. The collectivity of the receptive process in *Ofterdingen* is starkly reduced to a series of exchanges between Heinrich and various storytellers. If his reaction to a story is represented at all, he appears disengaged from his fellow listeners, thinking about the meaning of the story on his own. Accordingly, the groups around Heinrich serve as props for staging traditional storytelling to entertain and to pass time. But the novel itself is not interested in their internal dynamic. Rather, it is preoccupied with the relationship of the individual to the stories. Heinrich thus exemplifies the solitary reader emerging at Novalis's time.

Like Tieck's novel, *Ofterdingen* simultaneously creates and reflects upon the tension between oral culture and print. The printed book, however, is the ultimate form of the novel, Benjamin explains: "Das früheste Anzeichen eines Prozesses, an dessen Abschluß der Niedergang der Erzählung steht, ist das Aufkommen des Romans zu Beginn der Neuzeit. Was den Roman von der Erzählung [und vom Epischen im engeren Sinne] trennt, ist sein wesentliches Angewiesensein auf das Buch" (442). The novelistic narrative, Benjamin continues, stands in opposition to *Märchen* and *Sage*—forms that Novalis uses in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as embedded texts—as it does not stem from the oral tradition (443). Finally, "Wer einer Geschichte zuhört, der ist in der Gesellschaft des Erzählers; selbst wer liest, hat an dieser Gesellschaft teil. Der Leser eines Romans ist aber einsam. Er ist es mehr als jeder anderer Leser" (456).

In *Ofterdingen*, the representation of the solitary reader has important implications for the construction of a reading community. Kontje connects the scene in the cave and Novalis's novel in general to the explosive growth in book production during his time: "[T]he book within the book creates a model where each new text generates further texts in an uncontrollable flurry of literary production" (*Private Lives* 112). This development presumes a growth in the number of readers. But unlike *Sternbald*, *Ofterdingen* shows a preference for a restricted reading community that only admits readers like Heinrich to its circle. In fact, Novalis's novel rejects popular literature and narrows the group of selected readers even more than the *Lehrjahre*. "'Die Poesie will vorzüglich,' fuhr Klingsohr fort, 'als strenge Kunst getrieben werden. Als bloßer Genuß hört sie auf Poesie zu sein'" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 282, emphasis mine). Promoting high literature rejects thinking in terms of "entertainment" or "consumption." This makes both reading and writing lonely experiences.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, of course, people typically read in solitude. At the same time, however, a need emerged to find a community with which to share the experience. As his own journey begins, Heinrich remains a lonely reader who has no such community. But his alienation (as a reader) positions him to become a poet. That is, it prepares him for writing from the outset. This experience also sets him apart from Wilhelm and Franz who, unlike Heinrich, do not consciously prepare for roles as writers (to which they come through reading). By contrast, Heinrich's goal is to write. As part of his preparation, moreover, he recognizes that there is much to learn: "Es muß noch viel Worte geben, die ich nicht weiß: wüßte ich mehr, so könnte ich viel besser alles begreifen" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 195). We learn early on that he has a full support system for his aspirations: "Klücklich hast du den Lehrstand

erwählt, für den wir wachen und arbeiten,” says his father, who knows that nightly readings of wise ancestors are important for Heinrich’s *Bildung* (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 197).

4.3 FROM CONVERSATION THROUGH READING TO WRITING

Throughout *Ofterdingen*, Heinrich’s conversations point toward a common—although not explicitly expressed—goal of guiding the protagonist to become a poet who writes and produces his own texts. For example, the merchants engage him in conversation and storytelling about the poets of ancient times. And later, through his discussions with Klingsohr and others, Heinrich learns the essence of being a poet (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 281-87). As Minden emphasizes, the novel’s focus on “the vocation of the poet” is “no narrow theme” (195). Novalis scholarship ties becoming a poet and the poetic praxis to the aspirations of early Romantic authors, especially Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, who, in their encyclopedic Bible project, used *Poesie* to describe the synthetic unity of the world (Mahoney, *Friedrich von Hardenberg* 130; see also Kahn 51). The concept of Romantic *Poesie* can help us to understand how Heinrich’s listening to or reading stories fits into the quest of becoming a poet. According to Schmaus, Novalis said that poetry is the adequate medium for the subject who is searching for himself (*Die poetische Konstruktion* 45). Thus reading or listening to songs, tales, and an illuminated book provide Heinrich with examples of the lives of poets and simultaneously, give him the means to identification and self-definition. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Novalis’s notion of art (*Kunstbegriff*) includes not only production of works, but also their reception and the process of self-discovery (Schmaus, *Die poetische Konstruktion* 41). *Ofterdingen* demonstrates that reception and self-discovery are essential to producing art.

Early in the novel, Heinrich, like Franz, is identified by the merchants as a writer of verse: “Es dünkt uns, Ihr habt Anlage zum Dichter” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208). But unlike Franz, who aspires to be a painter and is mistaken for a poet, Heinrich confirms the merchants’ impression: “‘Ich weiß nicht,’ sagte Heinrich, ‘wie es kommt’” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 208), even though his preparation is still at an unconscious level. In his education, it is the tales about poets (*Dichter* and *Sänger*) that make the deepest impression on him.

Evaluation of the merchants’ role in the novel has taken several directions in the scholarship.⁴¹ Like Kasperowski, I see a reciprocal relationship between productivity in trade and in the arts (204) and argue that the merchants play a significant role in Heinrich’s education. They are not simple businessmen, but take on the role of storytellers, and as such, they make it possible for Heinrich to develop as a reader, which is a prerequisite for becoming a poet.⁴² Although they modestly claim that they do not know much about poetry (“Wir haben uns freilich nie um die Geheimnisse der Dichter bekümmert”) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 209), they introduce Heinrich to what it can mean to be a poet. The merchants, therefore, take on a pedagogical role during Heinrich’s journey and actively become involved in the development of readers and writers. Through their experience listening to poets, they feed Heinrich’s interest (*Schriften*, Vol.

⁴¹ Kuzniar, for example ties the merchants to entertainment and sees them as figures who do not misunderstand poetry: “The merchants value *Märchen* then not for their meaning, which is not only antedated but also lost to the reader of the present. Instead the fairy tales are a vehicle of entertainment” (*Delayed Endings* 109). Blackall underscores a contradiction that characterizes their representation: “One might expect them [the merchants] to represent mercantile, antipoetic forces to set up a contrast between the world of business and the world of dreams, between material and poetic values. But this is not exactly the case, for their talk is of art” (122). Kasperowski also questions an exclusively negative interpretation of the merchants (210). She notes the joy that their storytelling brings to the travelers (201-02), and she emphasizes Novalis’s distinction between medieval and contemporary merchants and argues that the former represents authentic mercantilism.

⁴² For Novalis, the oral transmission of poetic arts is only a preliminary stage: “Auch schafft sie [die Dichtkunst] nichts mit Werkzeugen und Händen; das Auge und das Ohr vernehmen nichts davon: denn das bloße Hören der Worte ist nicht die eigentliche Wirkung dieser geheimen Kunst. Es ist alles innerlich” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 209-10). The merchants give an insight into how the reception of literature should work.

1, 210). As traders, they facilitate exchange.⁴³ However, their exchange is not limited to the trade of goods; it also includes the exchange of stories.⁴⁴

This representation of merchants differentiates *Ofterdingen* from the *Lehrjahre* and *Sternbald*. Goethe's novel contrasts the worlds of businessmen and readers over the course of the novel—that is, over the course of Wilhelm's reading. Up until his admittance to the Society of the Tower, Wilhelm progressively moves away from commercial values and activities of his father's home. At the same time, Werner, Wilhelm's friend and later brother-in-law, gradually takes over his position in the family, eventually replacing the father in making financial decisions. At the end, we learn that the Society, which Wilhelm just joined, also supervises an economic discourse.⁴⁵ However, *Ofterdingen* makes explicit what is on the surface in the *Lehrjahre*, but the critique of commerce is not carried through without reservation in Goethe's novel. A further difference is that the members of the Society of the Tower are distinct characters in the *Lehrjahre*, each with his own role, while the merchants in *Ofterdingen* never appear as individuals but as a group of people. On the other hand, in Tieck's novel, figures associated with the business world are foregrounded early and take an active role in the novel. In fact, Vansen, the businessman, is a reader and, in his own way, an arts supporter. He even expresses a willingness to finance Franz's travel and art in return for his marriage to his daughter, although

⁴³ The comparison between merchants and poets that introduces chapter six clearly differentiates their roles in stories. Businessmen ("Menschen, die zum Handeln, zur Geschäftigkeit geboren sind") (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 266) contribute to stories through their action (*handeln*, meaning both "to act" and "to trade," and, similarly, *Geschäftigkeit*, meaning "activity" or "business" and including *Geschäft* as a stem meaning "business"). Thus, their actions become narratives. On the other hand, poets, who are "schon hier im Besitz der himmlischen Ruhe" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 267), should be taught by merchants only rarely. The tension between business and poetry is also present in the *Lehrjahre*, as we can see in an argument between Wilhelm and Werner: "Es mögen ganz artige Verse sein; aber die Vorstellungsart ist grundfalsch" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 388), Werner claims, and Wilhelm replies as follows "gewöhnlich vergeßt ihr aber auch über eurem Addieren und Bilanzieren das eigentliche Facit des Lebens" (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 389).

⁴⁴ "Eine informierte und rasonierende Öffentlichkeit lag nicht nur im Interesse der Geschäftsleute, sondern auch im Interesse der von den Gedanken der Aufklärung geprägten und sie weitertragenden Schriftsteller, Journalisten, Pädagogen, Professoren, also der literarisch Gebildeten" (Nusser 23).

⁴⁵ See Muenzer, *Figures of Identity* (47ff.) and Blessin, *Die Romane Goethes* (20ff.).

accepting the offer would compromise Franz's artistic integrity. Novalis's novel closes this gap even further: it introduces merchants as guides on Heinrich's journey, presenting them as an integral part of his education as a reader and a writer. The fact that they are always presented as a group emphasizes that the oral culture constituting Heinrich's educational environment is an idealized orality that cannot be reproduced.

The merchants in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* are constructed as storytellers. First, it is important to note that Novalis uses an historical time period to create a world where information sharing happens almost exclusively through storytelling.⁴⁶ Although his use of the High Middle Ages allows for the presentation of a mainly oral culture, it does not bring the storyteller closer to the real readers, who were educated in the print culture. In light of this, the difference between Novalis and Tieck in their use of an historical time is clear. Tieck creates a secondary orality with a wide range of participants from both high and popular culture. By contrast, Novalis creates an idealized orality in which he can focus on the act of storytelling. Heinrich's poetic aspirations explore the area between oral and print culture, as well as between reception and production. Frank draws our attention to the etymology of the verb *dichten* (to write poetry), which comes from the Latin *dictare*, meaning to say something to be written down. Until the seventeenth century, Frank continues, *dichten* meant the productive acts of conceiving and constructing intellectual products, as well as written utterances (11). The original meaning marks the transitional state in which the novel presents Heinrich. His environment is an oral culture informed by and featuring the new print culture. In his journey through orally narrated stories, he approaches print. He is not a poet yet, but we will follow his formation to the profession that

⁴⁶ In comparison, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, set in Goethe's time, utilizes many different forms of information sharing. Storytelling is just one of many.

eventually will lead him to writing. Nor is he a reader yet—in the narrow sense of reading—but a listener who will become a reader of print media.

It is significant that the merchants' stories are not their own. The assumption therefore arises that Heinrich, like the merchants, will pass the stories on as well.⁴⁷ Another central feature is that the merchants travel,⁴⁸ which provides an occasion for storytelling.⁴⁹ Benjamin emphasizes that the experience upon which the storyteller builds can be his own or reported, and he can, in turn, transform it into an experience for the listener (443). Thus, although the merchants have no literary aspirations, their function as storytellers is legitimate. And with that, they can serve with Klingsohr as educators of poets who must learn the world through listening and reading: "Ein einfaches Leben ist ihr Los, und nur aus Erzählungen und Schriften müssen sie mit dem reichen Inhalt, und den zahllosen Erscheinungen der Welt bekannt werden" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 267). Here listening and reading serve the same goal, which is to convey content to the recipient. Novalis appears to subscribe to the contemporary idea, posited by Bergk, that reading can replace firsthand experience (*Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 205). As Gaál-Baróti puts it, Heinrich "erkennt [...] in der fremden Erzählung das ihm schon Bekannte" (Gaál-Baróti 193). Novalis also formulates this idea in *Blüthenstaub*: "Wie kann ein Mensch Sinn für etwas haben, wenn er nicht den Keim davon in sich hat? Was ich verstehn soll, muß sich in mir organisch entwickeln; und was ich zu lernen scheine, ist nur Nahrung, Inzitant des Organismus" (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 419; Nr. 18). Reading only confirms values that one already possesses, but

⁴⁷ Benjamin: "Erfahrung, die von Mund zu Mund geht, ist die Quelle, aus der alle Erzähler geschöpft haben" (440) and "Geschichten erzählen ist ja immer die Kunst, sie weiter zu erzählen, und die verliert sich, wenn die Geschichten nicht mehr behalten werden" (446-47).

⁴⁸ Benjamin: "'Wenn einer eine Reise tut, so kann er was erzählen,' sagt der Volksmund und denkt sich den Erzähler als einen, der von weither kommt." In the next section, Benjamin then refers to Leskov's writing about merchants who are the messengers of stories ("die Vorläufer der Erzählungen") (440-41).

⁴⁹ Novalis's novel is suggestive of Goethe's later novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821/29), in the way how the storyteller works. Both novels tie storytelling to *wandern* (journey).

might not have developed. In this sense, it does not provide new information, but reevaluates things that are already known (Gaál-Baróti 194). Nonetheless the opposite seems to be true as well: “Man sollte, um das Leben und sich selbst kennen zu lernen, einen Roman immer nebenher schreiben” (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 544; Nr. 97). In addition to reading, writing one’s own novel is necessary for self-knowledge. Heinrich’s becoming a poet is a requirement to finish his *Bildung*.

So the novel follows Heinrich’s development as a poet. His vocation is clear from the outset through comments such as the narrator’s claim that he was born to be a poet: “Heinrich war von Natur zum Dichter geboren. Mannigfaltige Zufälle schienen sich zu seiner Bildung zu vereinigen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 267-68). His grandfather comes to a similar conclusion shortly after meeting Heinrich: “Mich däucht er ist zum Dichter geboren” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 271). Nevertheless, he is not at first a poet. Klingsohr must teach Heinrich the craft of poetry: “Ich will Euch mit Freuden in dem Handwerksmäßigen unserer Kunst unterrichten, und die merkwürdigsten Schriften mit euch lesen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 282). Whereas Wilhelm’s initiation into the Society of the Tower concludes his education as a reader, Heinrich’s acceptance by the Klingsohr family marks the beginning of a more focused education that will take him on a journey from the oral tradition to print. Klingsohr lays out the plan that includes their reading printed media (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 282-83), and Heinrich enthusiastically accepts his offer. Books and actual reading therefore occur more frequently after Heinrich’s acquaintance with Klingsohr: “Nachmittags führte Klingsohr seinen neuen Sohn [...] in seine Stube, und machte ihn mit den Büchern bekannt” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 284). Like Wilhelm, however, Heinrich returns to oral reading in the second part of the novel.

Because Heinrich will become a poet, he will also engage in writing. Gaál-Baróti claims that “Der Jüngling ist nicht nur Rezipient, sondern auch Neuschöpfer, Weiterführer des

Gehörten. Mit Hilfe seiner schöpferischen Phantasie macht er die ‘blaue Blume’ der Erzählung ‘gegenwärtig’” (191). As Novalis put it in a fragment: “Der wahre Leser muß der erweiterte Autor seyn” (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 470; Nr. 125). However, even if Heinrich creates something new as he recreates the stories that he hears in his imagination, he rarely writes. As Kuzniar notes, “throughout the rest of the novel Heinrich does not become poetically involved” (“Reassessing” 83). Though he rarely writes, poets in the embedded stories provide models for his writing. In the Atlantis-saga, for example, meeting the princess prompts the young poet to write a poem: “Der Jüngling betrachtete fast die ganze Nacht den Karfunkel und fühlte gegen Morgen ein unwiderstehliches Verlangen, einige Worte auf den Zettel zu schreiben, in welchen er den Stein einwickelte. Er wußte selbst nicht genau, was er sich bei den Worten dachte, die er hinschrieb” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 218). Writing is unconscious, emerging from previous readings and discussions. But the writing Heinrich does reaffirms his path to writing through reading.

Although Heinrich’s poetic aspirations become increasingly clear over the course of the novel, actual writing still occurs only infrequently. Heinrich first writes in the fifth chapter, during his discussion with the old miner: “Es dünkte Heinrichen, wie der Alte geendigt hatte, als habe er das Lied schon irgendwo gehört. Er ließ sich wiederholen und schrieb es sich auf” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 250). On the one hand, the song makes such an impression on him that he feels an urge to write it down so he can have access to it at any time. This need to archive the song in writing indicates a shortcoming of the oral culture. And, as Kittler suggests, it stands in contrast to the beginning of the chapter, when people simply speak: “ohne daß ihre Namen und Reden gesagt oder gar gespeichert würden. Und so läuft es bekanntlich alle Tage” (“*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß” 481). Heinrich’s urge here to record the song also points toward a combination of oral and print cultures. Because the miner’s song reminds Heinrich of

the Atlantis story, his behavior reveals the strategy of repetition in which the reader looks for similar experiences in every reading situation (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 122). This new kind of intensive reading can focus on different aspects of secular *Bildung*, such as aesthetics, philosophy, humanism, empiricism, or society, and thus differs from earlier (and traditional) intensive reading, which was exclusively religious (131). Such features of intensive reading were maintained among men of letters. Because of professional interest, authors, critics, publishers, and theater directors read a literary text more than once. As with traditional intensive reading, repetition was used to ascertain the meaning of the text, but the content and expected outcomes were different:

Ein Unterschied bestand aber wohl darin, daß es [intensives Lesen] der einen [traditionellen Wiederholungslektüre] darauf angekommen war, im sündigen Menschen eine überweltliche Wahrheit zu befestigen, während die andere [moderne Wiederholungslektüre] dem fühlenden Menschen im Wert eines anderen Lebens und des Gestaltens den Wert eigenen Lebens und Gestaltens widerspiegelte. (Engelsing, *Zur Sozialgeschichte* 129)

Heinrich's reading strategy follows this second model. His readings are never of religious interest. Even reading other's stories, he encounters texts that mirror and foreshadow his own life. In this sense, a reciprocal relationship evolves between Heinrich and texts: they foretell his story and, as Heinrich hears them, he mirrors them: "In Heinrichs Gemüt spiegelt sich das Märchen des Abends" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 252).

In discussions between the hermit, the old miner, and the Count of Hohenzollern, the topic of writing emerges. The conversation serves as a lesson for Heinrich when the Count makes an explicit comparison between an historian and a poet: "Wenn ich das alles recht bedenke, so scheint es mir, als wenn ein Geschichtschreiber notwendig auch ein Dichter sein müßte, denn nur die Dichter mögen sich auf jene Kunst, Begebenheiten schicklich zu verknüpfen, verstehn" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 259). During the ensuing discussion, the characteristics

of a good writer emerges. People who write history should be “gottesfürchtige Leute [...], deren Geschichte selbst zu Ende ist” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 258). This means that Heinrich must develop his own life story before he can start to write, and he needs to learn more as well. “[E]r [kann] nur dasjenige deutlich und vollkommen beschreiben, was er genau kennt” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 259), we are told, which Klingsohr later confirms:

Daher kann man sagen, daß die Poesie ganz auf Erfahrung beruht. Ich weiß selbst, daß mir in jungen Jahren ein Gegenstand nicht leicht zu entfernt und zu unbekannt sein konnte, den ich nicht am liebsten besungen hätte. Was wurde es? ein leeres, armseliges Wortgeräusch, ohne einen Funken wahrer Poesie. Daher ist auch ein Märchen eine sehr schwierige Aufgabe, und selten wird ein junger Dichter sie gut lösen. (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 286-87)

Here Klingsohr offers Heinrich a lesson based on his own example. As a young poet, he too wrote unpoetic texts, but he learned to write real *Poesie* through experience. This speech indicates that Heinrich will follow a similar path.

Then, at the conclusion of the first part of the novel, Klingsohr tells a fairy tale about the salvation of the world through poetry and love during the Golden Age.⁵⁰ Klingsohr’s tale, according to Minden, can be read as another *Bildungsroman* (190). And for Link, it not only summarizes Novalis’s novel, but indicates what its missing ending might have included (161).⁵¹ By focusing on reading and writing,⁵² moreover, the tale marks a crucial transition in *Ofterdingen* by introducing Klingsohr and announcing Heinrich’s engagement to his daughter Mathilda. Finally, it concludes Heinrich’s *Bildung* as a reader and initiates his education as a poet and as Klingsohr’s apprentice. The order of Heinrich’s learning from reading to writing, which is also followed by Wilhelm and Franz, corresponds to a nineteenth century pedagogical

⁵⁰ Its allegorical figures represent various ideas or values, including Fabel (poetry), Eros (love), Sophie (philosophy), and Schreiber (rationalism) (Minden 126-27).

⁵¹ See also Schmaus *Die poetische Konstruktion* 61.

⁵² For more on Klingsohr’s tale see Minden (190), Gaál-Baróti (193), Link (152ff.), Molnár (116ff.), Kontje (*Private Lives* 119ff.), Mahr (210-49), Kittler (“Die Irrwege des Eros und die ‘Absolute Familie’”), and Pikulik (231ff.).

practice that has its roots in the Middle Ages: “Eine für uns befremdliche Besonderheit hat dieses mittelalterliche Lernen, die aber bis ins 19. Jahrhundert hinein bestehen bleibt: Man lernt zuerst lesen und erst, wenn man dies beherrscht, wird das Lernen des Schreibens begonnen” (Schön, *Der Verlust* 33).⁵³

It is noteworthy that Klingsohr’s *Märchen*, an orally narrated story, and not the illuminated book, brings the reading phase of Heinrich’s *Bildung* to closure.⁵⁴ But does orality really defeat print culture, as Kittler concludes?⁵⁵ The content of the famous Märchen actually complicates this issue, as the tale features print by contrasting Schreiber and Fabel. Schreiber records and archives everything: “Der Schreiber schrieb unverdrossen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 293). However, writing (or print) does not carry value by itself. The scribe stands under the censorship of Sophie (Kittler, “*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* als Nachrichtenfluß” 497) and is depicted negatively (“Sein feindseliges Gemüt”) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 301). Everything he writes must pass a test: “Der Schreiber ward bald des Betrachtens überdrüssig. Er schrieb alles genau auf, und war sehr weitläufig über den Nutzen, den dieser Fund gewähren könne. Wie ärgerlich war er aber, als sein ganzes Schreibwerk die Probe nicht bestand, und das Papier weiß aus der Schale hervorkam” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 294-95). Clearly, just recording and archiving is not worthy of writing. If the writing cannot be approved by Sophie, the paper should remain blank. There is no accumulation of unworthy print material. Fabel provides the contrast with Schreiber. She represents poetry and oral culture: “die kleine Fabel saß auf demselben, und sang zur Harfe die süßesten Lieder” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 300). She is able to turn Schreiber’s writing into something

⁵³ Compare to “Beide, Karl Philipp Moritz und Friedrich Hurter, lernen rasch und früh lesen, erst später und dann jahrelang schreiben” (Bosse, “Die Schüler” 170). For the instruction of writing see Bosse, “‘Die Schüler müssen selbst schreiben lernen’ oder Die Einrichtung der Schiefertafel.”

⁵⁴ This situation is historically authentic, as Saenger points out: “[i]n antiquity and the early Middle Ages, when texts were composed orally, authors expected them to be read aloud. In the fourteenth century, when texts were composed in silent isolation in cursive script, authors expected them to be read silently” (133).

⁵⁵ “Am Ende triumphiert die reine Mündlichkeit” (Kittler, “Die Irrwege” 446).

that Sophie approves: “Die kleine Fabel nahm die Feder des Schreibers und fing zu schreiben an. [...] Er reichte Sophien die von Fabel vollgeschriebenen Blätter, um sie rein zurück zu erhalten, geriet aber bald in den äußersten Unwillen, wie Sophie die Schrift völlig glänzend und unversehrt aus der Schale zog und sie ihm hinlegte” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 295-96). Fabel’s ability to produce a text that lives up to Sophie’s approval shows Heinrich that writing worth archiving must stem from both philosophy and poetry. As Novalis formulates it in a fragment, “Die transscendentale Poësie ist aus Philosophie und Poësie gemischt” (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 536; Nr. 47) and “Ohne Philosophie unvollkommener Dichter” (*Schriften*, Vol. 2, 531; Nr. 29).⁵⁶

The tale can be understood as a quarrel between oral and print culture embodied in the figures of Fabel and the Schreiber. The tale makes it clear that Fabel—poetry and with her oral culture—is threatened by the Schreiber—that is print culture: “Der Schreiber jagte die kleine Fabel mit vielen Schmähungen von seinem Sitze” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 295-96). However, he is ignored (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 296), which makes him turn against Fabel and Sophie (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 301). Schreiber’s hostility continues, but the tale ends with the song of Fabel: “Die Fabel spann emsig und sang mit lauter Stimme” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 315). With Fabel’s song about Sophie’s victory, the tale indicates the triumph of orality over print. The tale begins Heinrich’s formal apprenticeship with Klingsohr and concludes the first part of the novel.

The fragmentary second part of the novel reiterates many of the issues at stake in the first part, such as the role of conversation and discussion, the reception of stories, as well as reading, and writing. The scenery changes and Heinrich appears as a pilgrim wandering alone. His solitude seems final. It is also the first time he sings a song: “Der Pilger ergriff seine Laute und

⁵⁶ Novalis: “Die Poësie ist der Held der Philosophie. Die Phil[osophie] erhebt die Poësie zum Grundsatz. Sie lehrt uns den Werth der Poësie kennen. Phil[osophie] ist *die Theorie* der *Poësie*. Sie zeigt uns was die Poësie sey, daß sie Eins uns alles sey” (Vol. 2 590-91; Nr. 280).

sang” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 323). However, unlike with previous examples of poets, his song is not intended for an audience.

Shortly after he sings, Heinrich meets Sylvester, an old recluse and doctor. Their conversation synthesizes Heinrich’s experiences in the first part. They talk about childhood and education, and Sylvester asks Heinrich to tell him about his childhood: “so fahrt fort mir von Eurem frühern Leben etwas zu erzählen” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 327). Heinrich’s account is not included in the novel, but this is the first time that he also appears as a storyteller. As Heinrich talks, the old man concludes that “Eure Eltern, die vortreffliche Landgräfin, die beiden Nachbarn Eures Vaters, und der alte Hofkaplan machen eine schöne Gesellschaft aus. Ihre Gespräche müssen frühzeitig auf Euch gewürkt haben” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 328). Sylvester approves of Heinrich’s upbringing and *Bildung*. Thus, Novalis’s novel seemingly argues for restoring a community that would engage its readers in discussion. At the same time, however, through the example of Heinrich it also establishes a modern reader in more general terms. Heinrich is undoubtedly an extensive reader, which Novalis confirms once more when Sylvester offers a prediction: “Ewig wird er lesen und ich nicht satt lesen und täglich neue Bedeutungen, neue entzückendere Offenbarungen der liebenden Natur gewahr werden” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 329). Finally, at the end of Heinrich and Sylvester’s discussion, they talk about poetry and *Bildung*. Sylvester indicates that Heinrich will be part of an effort to unite *Fabel* (fable) and *Geschichte* (history) (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 333): “Euch wird alles verständlich werden, und die Welt und ihre Geschichte verwandelt sich Euch in die Heilige Schrift, sowie Ihr an der Heiligen Schrift das große Beispiel habt, wie in einfachen Worten und Geschichten das Weltall offenbart werden kann” (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 333-34). Consequently, while the novel remains a fragment, it seems that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* suggests that discourse should be revitalized in print.

Novalis's novel presents writing and reading in an even more intimate relationship than Goethe's and Tieck's. In fact, it privileges a suggestion in Bergk (1799), who turned the contemporary learning practice—to learn to read and then to write—into a virtue: “Hat jemand Anlage zum Dichter oder Künstler, so werden sich seine Talente dazu gewiß durch eine fleißige und durchdachte Lektüre der Ersten und durch ein öfteres geistiges Beschauen der Werke der Letzteren entwickeln” (*Die Kunst Bücher zu lesen* 132-33). Whereas in the *Lehrjahre* and *Sternbald*, reading unconsciously leads to writing, in *Ofterdingen* reading actually becomes its prerequisite.

5.0 THE EARLY *BILDUNGSROMAN* AND READING

As technological advances create new ways to share information, how it is processed changes as well. Such innovations can also affect how people read. In turn, new reading behaviors prompt concern about their implications. In recent public debates, new computer technology, especially the Internet, has led to concerns about the damaging impact of new reading behaviors on established modes of reading. But new media always require a new literacy.¹ In the twentieth century, for example, new visual texts such as motion pictures expanded our notion of reading. And with the growth of the Internet, new types of writing, such as hypertext, continue to challenge established reading techniques and require us to respond to new types of texts outside the covers of a book. We even find ourselves wondering and concerned that books, newspapers, and magazines are dead.²

I have shown how in much the same way the exponential growth of available books changed reading behavior two hundred years ago. Goethe's *Lehrjahre* (1795-96), Tieck's *Sternbald* (1798), and Novalis's *Ofterdingen* (1802) reacted to and reflected upon the changes in readerly behavior brought on by advances in book production and by the transition from intensive to extensive reading. Then, as today, public discourse concerning reading (both in

¹ See Kress's *Literacy in the New Age*.

² Recently, a regular topic on National Public Radio has been the fact that newspapers are discontinuing print operations and offering their services exclusively on the Internet. See, for example, "Christian Science Monitor Shifts Focus to Web," an interview in *Fresh Air* (Yemma) and "Where Will You Get Your News In 2012?" an interview in *Talk of the Nation* (Rosensteil). See also Kelly's *New York Times* article "Becoming Screen Literate" (November 23, 2008), Birkerts's *The Gutenberg Elegies*, and "End Times," an interview with Bill Keller, executive editor of *The New York Times* in the *The Daily Show* (Jones).

terms of content and behavior) led to broader discussions about means of recording, archiving, and sharing information.

While the general mode of reading shifted from intensive to extensive reading during the Age of Goethe, however, old modes and strategies did not simply vanish. Instead, they were appropriated, redeployed, and sometimes even reinvented in ways that recall Thomas Kuhn's description of scientific revolutions:

Since new paradigms are born from old ones, they ordinarily incorporate much of the vocabulary and apparatus, both conceptual and manipulative, that the traditional paradigm had previously employed. But they seldom employ these borrowed elements in quite the traditional way. Within the new paradigm, old terms, concepts, and experiments fall into new relationships one with the other. (148)

As my analysis of the three novels in this dissertation has shown, incorporating older features of reading into new modes was both necessary and productive. Even my own reading and scholarship illustrates Kuhn's point. Experiencing similar challenges and paradigmatic changes caused by the ever-changing computer technology first hand piqued my curiosity about the history of reading. The questions of how our established mode of reading first emerged and how historical changes are represented in fiction needed to be addressed. The scene in Goethe's *Lehrjahre* in the *Saal der Vergangenheit* (the Hall of the Past) when Wilhelm encounters his life story written in the scroll, has intrigued me since I first read the novel. As a professional and intensive reader myself, I have come back to this scene time and time again as other questions have arisen. While researching the history of reading and thinking about its implications for the three novels, I asked myself whether Wilhelm's experience in this particular location (the Hall of the Past) could be seen as a pregnant moment, what Lessing calls the "single moment in time" (*Laokoön* 19) ("der einzige Augenblick [*Laokoön* 31]), that the artist must choose for a sculpture to capture an entire story.

Returning to the scene in Goethe's novel that initiated my journey through the history of reading has proved rewarding. The Hall of the Past is a synthesis of the various elements of the novel that I have analyzed, and it provides a model for Tieck's and Novalis's novels as well. The first description of the Hall resembles unmistakably a theater stage and simultaneously references a church:

[N]un bemerkte er erst, daß die Seiten des Raums, in dem er sich befand, nur mit Teppichen behangen waren [...] Der Saal, in dem er sich nunmehr befand, schien ehemals eine Kapelle gewesen zu sein, an statt des Altars stand ein großer Tisch, auf einigen Stufen mit einem grünen Teppich behangen, darüber schien ein zugezogener Vorhang ein Gemälde zu bedecken; an den Seiten waren schön gearbeitete Schränke mit feinen Drahtgittern verschlossen, wie man sie in Bibliotheken zu sehen pflegt, nur sah er an statt der Bücher viele Rollen aufgestellt. (FA, Vol. 1/9, 871-72)

Although Jarno has been highly critical about Wilhelm's involvement with the theater, the setting of the room, which also provides the introduction to the scroll containing Wilhelm's life, seems to approve his affair with the theater by including props from a stage. In my understanding of the novel, the act of reading that the *Puppenspiel* and staging promotes justifies the detour in Wilhelm's journey through the theater. Just as his early reading experiences are rooted in intensive reading, the Hall of the Past makes a gesture toward that kind of reading through its origin as a chapel. However, features crucial to the sacred service, such as the altar, have been replaced with quotidian objects, such as a table. This stands for the changes that intensive reading underwent in the eighteenth century. It has not disappeared, but it has become secular, serving specific purposes in a reading culture that is extensive, as is repetitive reading in the theater or for scholarship. Furthermore, the Hall's connection to reading is also stated explicitly, as the furniture to the side is compared to library bookshelves. Featuring scrolls instead of books provides a twist to this comparison by highlighting the special nature of the reading that takes place here. Wilhelm's reading of the scroll cannot be compared to reading just any kind of book.

When Wilhelm later returns to the Hall, further descriptions offer additional information crucial to my discussion. In the initial depiction, we learn that a picture hangs there. And more pictures are described when Wilhelm has a chance to spend time there again: “Wilhelms Augen schweiften auf unzählige Bilder umher” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 921). Since the room includes both scrolls and pictures, Goethe’s novel puts reading and viewing in the same place—a connection that is further explored in the two Romantic novels.

The Hall of the Past facilitates reading that has also been explored throughout the novel. While the scrolls, print documents, and the Hall’s resemblance to a library suggest silent and solitary reading, members of the society such as Jarno visit it to assist Wilhelm in interpreting his own “Lehrjahre.” To do this, he recites passages to the protagonist, who is then engaged in a discussion about the scroll’s content (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 929-935). With these two participants, Wilhelm’s and Jarno’s exchanges offer a form of orality that stands between solitary and communal reading. But the Hall also hosts events where all the members gather, such as Mignon’s funeral. In addition to the gathering of the members, there is place for a choir, which emphasizes listening and the sociable aspect of orality.

Although the place that collects all aspects of reading in the novel is called the *Saal der Vergangenheit* (the Hall of the Past), it has not only been connected to the past, as its name suggests, but also to the future and present. These references emphasize the liminality of the categories that are at work in the *Lehrjahre*. Significantly, Wilhelm reflects on the name: “Welch ein Leben, rief er aus, in diesem Saale der Vergangenheit!”, and he immediately adds, “man könnte ihn eben so gut den Saal der Gegenwart und der Zukunft nennen” (*FA*, Vol. 1/9, 921). Wilhelm’s reaction emphasizes the Hall’s capacity to unite important features of his own reading experience and, is, therefore, paradigmatic for the way the novel presents the history of reading.

Consequently, it also sets an example for the novels that follow. The *Lehrjahre* is set in Goethe's own time, making historical modes of reading part of its present. It thus records historical trends through Wilhelm's education as a reader, tracing the transition from intensive to extensive reading based on his changing abilities and interests. This configuration allows Goethe to present Wilhelm experiencing events over a few years that in fact evolved over decades. Consequently, his individual life represents events in cultural history.

Tieck's and Novalis's novels construct their protagonists' reading upon the scene of Wilhelm reading the scroll in the Hall of the Past. In fact, each Romantic novel has a scene that is comparable in significance for its protagonist. The episode on the ship en route to Antwerp is perhaps, the most important scene in *Sternbald*, although it is less pregnant than the comparable scene in the *Lehrjahre*. Just as Wilhelm finds a description of his life in the scroll, Franz encounters his own story on the ship. However, this occurs early in Tieck's novel, and not at the end as in Goethe's novel. Consequently, instead of synthesizing, it foreshadows. But like the Hall of the Past, the ship as a place of reading also represents liminality, by showing that the categories used to describe reading in the novel stand in a dynamic relationship to one another.

Like the Hall of the Past, the ship is a manmade structure. However, a building can be entered and exited any time, while a ship, once it has left harbor, is a place without escape. Tieck does not offer a detailed description of the ship, but focuses instead on the storytelling and discussion that take place there. However, a casual comment, "Das Schiff fuhr fort, und man sah links weit in das ebene Land hinein" (*FSW* 136), actually has greater significance than it might seem at first glance. The ship apparently provides stationary ground, but it is constantly moving between harbors. The time between departure and arrival offers an opportunity to the travelers to use the resources that are available to them. One of them, Vansen, turns to a book, while others

could presumably have books as well. However, the company quickly engages in singing, storytelling, and discussions. And this orality turn to orality, as Chapter Three shows, proves to be beneficial. However, with the changing itinerary of the ship, Franz frequently and spontaneously encounters new stories, as he was experiencing the flourishing book market of Tieck's own day. While the Hall of the Past is constructed as an archive of scrolls and functions as a library, the ship becomes a place where songs and stories are collected. However, the stories and songs are not available at any time, like the scrolls in the Hall of the Past, since the ship does not stand still and the water does not offer a firm foundation. And, perhaps most importantly, the passengers, who are both listeners and potential the storytellers, change at every harbor, allowing the novel to address both the benefits and shortcomings of the oral tradition.

Sternbald thus draws attention to certain tensions between the contemporary print and an older visual culture, but within an historical setting. Combining elements from the Reformation with trends of the late eighteenth century, Tieck unites aesthetic reception—that is, reading and listening—with production—that is, writing and painting—in constructing his protagonist's education. His novel configures the shift from intensive to extensive reading, as well as the relationship between oral, visual, and written cultures, in a plot about a young artist who spends most of his time not drawing or painting, but listening to stories, engaging in conversations, singing songs, and writing. Through these activities, the novel exhibits a unique connection to the historical forms of reading. Tieck does not, however, represent a nostalgic wish for a return to the oral tradition. Although orality is available for renewal within the new paradigm, Franz's rejection of intensive reading reveals his awareness that it cannot simply be restored. Consequently, a new oral culture emerges in a productive reciprocal relation with secularization, extensive reading, solitary and silent reading, as well as visuality.

Tieck's novel explicitly makes the history of reading thematic in his novel by contrasting his own time with the Reformation, when reading the Bible in German started to take hold, as I showed in Chapter Three. Although his novel mainly uses the period of the Reformation as an historical backdrop for contemporary issues, it establishes a powerful contrast to Tieck's own time and provides a basis for understanding what has transpired.³ Unlike the *Lehrjahre*, *Sternbald* incorporates historical layers to highlight the forces that caused changes in reading over time.

While Goethe's novel focuses on changes in Wilhelm as a reader, *Sternbald* analyzes its protagonist's changing environment by examining the space of reading. Each protagonist moves through this space, where categories such as *intensive* versus *extensive reading*, *reading aloud* versus *reading silently*, and *communal* versus *solitary reading* are dynamically at work. That is to say, reading is made visible in all three novels and becomes the organizing event for their protagonists' *Bildung*. In the *Lehrjahre*, the places of reading through which Wilhelm moves are considerably more diverse than in *Sternbald* and *Ofterdingen*, although the theater dominates the landscape of his development by providing both a physical and virtual place where intensive and extensive reading enter into a dialogue. Through this dialogue, moreover, these modalities lose their historical character, as they serve Wilhelm's changing needs for dealing with texts. The theater thus provides a place where his reading can be realized developmentally.

Goethe's novel stages reading in other sites as well, including Wilhelm's home, Aurelie's sickroom, and the Hall of the Past. Most of the reading and storytelling takes place indoors or in enclosed areas, where Wilhelm explores a wide range of reading behaviors and strategies. These include reading a text for the first time and then over and over, memorizing passages and

³ Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the differences between the periods by introducing yet another: the period when the Bible was translated into Latin.

performing them, and feeling the urge to find new reading materials. And since all these behaviors are prompted from within, it appears that Wilhelm has an intrinsic motivation to read. Whereas the theater, as a public institution, invites a variety of characters to participate in its own events, the Society of the Tower, as an exclusive club, invites the participation only of a select group. Thus the space of reading in the *Lehrjahre* effects the configuration of the protagonist as a reader, as well as the readerly community that surrounds him.

By contrast, Franz wanders through the open landscape of Medieval Europe, where he repeatedly encounters storytelling. Like the ship, Franz is always on the move. This changing landscape both provides and represents the place of reading: everywhere Franz goes, he finds stories to consume, which in turn evokes the proliferation of book production, the growing number of reading circles, and the lending libraries with their cheap widely available prints around the turn of the nineteenth century. Most of the time, both storyteller and listener are traveling. Their physical movements often initiate and conclude their leaving and entering reading situations. As Franz wanders through Europe, he not only meets sedentary people, but also others like him, who are wandering. This allows Tieck to contrast Franz's spatially defined reading experiences with the other characters. The situation in which he joins the farmer's family in an intensive reading of religious stories, for example, emphasizes that the family is bound to repeat the same kind of reading, because it is bound to a particular location. By contrast, Franz moves on to new locations to experience new reading situations.

Novalis's novel unites features from Goethe and Tieck in its construction of a pregnant moment of reading. The cave in Book Five, where Heinrich finds an illuminated book depicting his life, is a solid and stationary structure that serves as an underground hall like the Hall of the Past. But it is natural, and not manmade, as are most such sites in *Sternbald*. And while the cave

is in the open landscape, it is not easily accessible like Goethe's Hall. People only vaguely know about it: "Den Leuten aus dem Dorfe waren diese Höhlen schon bekannt: aber bis jetzt hatte keiner gewagt hineinzusteigen" (*Schriften*, Vol. 1, 251). Accordingly, instead of a membership, Heinrich needs the old miner's guidance to find it, as well as his mother's permission to undertake the adventure. This indicates both his reading experience in the cave is not accessible to everyone and that he needs the assistance of an expert to accomplish it. These stipulations are symptomatic of his other reading experiences as well.

The cave includes a special collection of books—recalling the library in the Hall of the Past—put there by the hermit. Although it is not as systematic as the collection of the scrolls, it includes an illuminated book that is comparable to Wilhelm's "Lehrjahre." A unique feature of the Provençal book is its depiction of the place where Heinrich is reading. This doubling of the cave allows Novalis to inscribe the temporality of the place—what Wilhelm called the Hall of the Past, Present, and Future—onto the pages of a book, thereby making the place of reading virtual.

Like *Sternbald*, *Ofterdingen* also frequently places its protagonist in an open landscape that serves as a backdrop for storytelling. While Tieck's novel investigates the broad readerly community that emerges within an open landscape, Novalis uses the open landscape to single out Heinrich as a solitary reader or listener. Most of the first part of *Ofterdingen* takes place during Heinrich's journey to Augsburg. Unlike Franz, whose wandering takes detours as new situations arise, Heinrich has a clear goal. This corresponds to his reading (or listening) habits: he absorbs every story that he encounters. The landscape of Heinrich's traveling is more limited than Franz's, but it is still an open, natural landscape. However, the spaces of reading serve different functions in Tieck's and Novalis's novels. While Franz blends into crowds of readers and

storytellers, Heinrich stands out. Tieck's novel uses the space of reading to create wide community, while Novalis assembles a highly specialized community for the future poet.

In short, all three novels tell a story of personal and historical modes of reading—intensive and extensive, communal and solitary, and loud and silent—with individual examples. Placing these historical modes into places like the theater and the Hall of the Past in the *Lehrjahre*, the ship in *Sternbald*, or the cave in *Ofterdingen* assigns a temporal character to them. These temporalized places of reading do not just work as historical markers, but put the categories of reading into dialogue with each other. Time and space thus work together to make scenes of reading into narrative events that organizes the novels' plots, provide structure, and constitute their protagonists' *Bildung*. In Goethe's, Tieck's, and Novalis's novels, reading becomes the dynamic story of *Bildung*.

Investigating reading in early *Bildungsroman* inevitably leads to the question of how reading relates to *Bildung*. In Chapter One, I showed that changes in reading behaviors could be tied, on the one hand, to the proliferation of book production and, on the other, to changing pedagogical practices at the end of the eighteenth century. As the lexicon article on “Bildung” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* emphasizes, “Vielmehr war diese ‘pädagogische Bewegung’ Ergebnis eines umfassenden Wandels des Bildes vom Menschen, aus dem eine neue Erziehungs- und Bildungskonzeption hervorging” (Brunner 517). It is important to note that this new concept of *Bildung* emerging at that time was deeply rooted in the book culture and, thus, in written language. Moses Mendelssohn emphasizes this connection in his essay “Über die Frage: was heißt aufklären?”: “Die Worte *Aufklärung*, *Kultur*, *Bildung* sind in unserer Sprache noch neue Ankömmlinge. Sie gehören vor der Hand bloß zur Büchersprache” (193). For Herder, the

connection to language is also crucial: “Das ‘sonderbare Mittel zur Bildung der Menschen’ sei die Sprache, das, was ihn überhaupt zum Menschen mache” (Brunner 517).

When seen in this context, the analysis of *Bildung* in the three novels and its connection to book culture seems especially significant, as does Boes’s definition of *Bildung*, which becomes the basis for his analysis of Goethe’s *Lehrjahre* in the context of the conceptual changes at the end of the eighteenth century: “*Bildung* refers not to the personal formation nowadays associated with the term (largely due to the legacy of the *Bildungsroman*), but to a form of historical emplotment” (275). In my own discussion, Boes’s notion of historical emplotment is suggestive for the development (*Bildung*) of all three protagonists, whose personal formation repeats significant moments in the history of reading. In the context of my dissertation, the relationship between *Bildung* and history concerns the idea that the protagonists in the *Lehrjahre*, *Sternbald*, and *Ofterdingen* experience developments in the history of reading as part of their *Bildung*. However, this personal history is not a reproduction of the historical events. Rather, the protagonists represent unique examples that are syntheses of historical events and contemporary trends. Thus, *Bildung* is presented in the novels as a dynamic process.

For Goethe, *Bildung* has various levels: “Eigenes Streben, Führung durch andere Menschen und Aufgabe, andere Menschen zu bilden” (Brunner 518). While the Society of the Tower facilitates Wilhelm’s *Bildung* as an institution, some of its members, like Jarno, may not approve of his affair with the theater. Through reading Wilhelm is able to author his early education. His previous reading experiences (including the theater) also help him to enter the Society and then fulfill his role in it. By contrast, the readerly environment in Tieck’s novel recalls the contemporary *Lesegesellschaft*, which served as a place where people from the educated class could associate (“Vermischung der Menschen von der gebildeten Ständen”)

(Brunner 525). Although the novel focuses on Franz's *Bildung*, throughout the text a great number of characters join him in reading, storytelling, and singing. Often the stories told are not told directly to Franz, but to a larger audience. The opposite is true for the process of *Bildung* in *Ofterdingen*. The novel follows Heinrich through a journey that offers him an academic ("gelehrte") *Bildung*, that is, a philosophical, aesthetic, and literary education. Thus, Heinrich's path stands in opposition to the more general kind of education we find in Tieck's novel.

Discussing *Bildung* in these novels is tightly connected to the community that surrounds the protagonists. The novels' prototypical scenes offer summarizing insights into how reading communities are constructed in the novels. The Hall of the Past in the *Lehrjahre* is only accessible to the members of the society. Although the Society takes new members such as Wilhelm, it is an exclusive club with privileges. In *Sternbald*, a randomly selected company of strangers gathers on the ship. Some long lasting relationships emerge (between Franz and Vansen as well as Rudolf), but the rest of the company will never see each other again. Similarly casual reading communities evolve and disperse throughout the novel. Finally, there is the cave in *Ofterdingen*. Although it hosts a large group of people on the expedition led by the old miner, Heinrich soon finds himself alone there with the hermit, engaging in reading and discussion. This reading community thus consists of a few select people who assist him in his *Bildung*.

The discussion of community in the novels is deeply embedded in the discussion of orality and its relationship to print. Each of the novels represents reactions to the changes that print culture had on oral culture. These changes especially affected the relationship between audiences and authors. Print alienates audiences from the producers of texts: "[i]ndem die allgemeine Verschriftlichung des sozialen Verkehrs Textproduzenten und –rezipienten einander immer weiter entfernt, [...] wird die direkte Konversion von Reden und in Gedanken durch die

Diskontinuität von Schreiben und Lesen unmöglich gemacht” (Matala de Mazza 257). But the novels also attempt to restore orality by making it the primary reading environment for their protagonists. Although each of them concludes that print culture and its effects are inevitable and irreversible, all of the novels privilege an alternative world where print and orality can coexist and reciprocally affect one another. Even though print makes sharing easy and convenient, the novels react to its rapid spread at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by promoting a restored form of orality. This tendency becomes stronger over the course of the novels. Thus, while the *Lehrjahre* presents orality as an alternative within print culture, *Sternbald* and *Ofterdingen* turn toward it more completely to explore its effects on the emergent print culture. In the end, then, the protagonists of the novels, who are exposed to a variety of media, must acquire multiple reading abilities to navigate the dynamic fields of their oral, visual, and textual experiences.

Despite this growing interest in orality, however, the novels do not avoid addressing the tension between oral and print culture. Thus, whereas print and writing permit the reliable transmission of knowledge, within the oral tradition people depend on memory, which is less reliable for storing knowledge. Books and written documents also separate themselves from their recipients, while oral culture promotes direct communication and face-to-face encounters among multiple participants. This social aspect becomes important in the novels,⁴ which re-appropriate oral literacy because of its social value: the oral tradition encourages instant communication, which is the basis of community-making. Schutjer argues that Wilhelm’s *Bildung* “allows him to find his appropriate community” (117). This dissertation shows that reading allows Wilhelm, Franz, and Heinrich each to find his own community of readers.

⁴ Resnick and Gordon assign a great social function to literacy: “Literacy in social history can be understood as any kind of written or oral communication employing language to achieve desired social ends” (16).

In the *Lehrjahre*, reading provides several ways for Wilhelm to connect to other characters who shape him. In his childhood, for example, he has a special connection to his mother through the puppet theater. She observes his close relationships to books. As reading leads him to the theater as a young adult Wilhelm becomes briefly involved with a local group and Mariane, the actress who later gives birth to his son. Reading also marks Wilhelm's pathway to the *Turmgesellschaft* (Society of the Tower). These are just a few examples from the novel that not only show how reading sets up social connections, but also demonstrate how reading helps to organize Wilhelm's life with long-term effects.

In *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821/29), Goethe expands on Wilhelm's journey and on the role of community in his life. As a full member of the Society of the Tower, he takes part in an extended correspondence within the Society. And while the novel maintains certain features of orality, its primary focus shifts to recording and archiving. Although Bahr places the *Wanderjahre* in the tradition of the epistolary novel, he specifies it even further as an "archival novel" ("*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*" 167).⁵ Instead of storyteller and reader, it presents a fictitious editor who "is assigned the task of producing and preserving the fiction of the novel" (179). Wilhelm's entry into the Tower, therefore, concludes not only his apprenticeship as a reader, but also the novel's focus on reading. The interventions of the *Wanderjahre*'s editor (arranging narratives, organizing isolated texts), draw attention to another side of book production and its effect on the community than what is in the three novels under consideration present.

⁵ "Goethe's arrangement of single narratives within the frame story can be much more adequately explained by the model of the archival novel" (Bahr, "*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*" 178). See also Bahr's *The Novel as Archive* and Neuhaus's "Die Archivfiktion in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*."

In *Sternbald* the presents an oral culture is inclusive and participatory. In contrast to the private sharing in the *Lehrjahre*, here anyone can join discussions, tell stories, or listen. No admission is required for membership, as in the case of the Society of the Tower. The open social network created by storytelling is emphasized by Luther's importance in the novel. Furthermore, the environment in *Sternbald* supports different opinions and interpretations promoting instantaneous exchange. This kind of spontaneous communication creates a lively sociability throughout the novel. Under the disguise of orality, Tieck addresses the emergence of mass literature. The novel creates an environment through an open landscape that allows for effortless and informal information sharing. Topics are often of general interest and compatible with popular literature, which invites a wide variety of participants, regardless of social backgrounds and education. In his travels through this kind of environment Franz can leave the small circle of Nuremberg artists and meet different kinds of people who—directly or indirectly—help him find his beloved Marie.

The setting in *Ofterdingen* is similar to *Sternbald*'s, as it presents Heinrich moving through an open landscape. However, it does not promote the kind of social network that we find in Tieck's novel. Although Heinrich is often among people, he does not typically join them in the flow of discussion. The focus instead is on the protagonist alone as he acquires knowledge. The goal of his reading is to become a poet. Thus, the stories he hears serve that purpose alone. As a consequence, the social network that emerges around him is more limited than in *Sternbald*. Yet when characters like Zulima recognize his talent or the merchants, the miner, and Klingsohr teach him about the essence of being a poet, it helps Heinrich to achieve his goal.

Despite the role of the community, reading serves self-education in the three novels. It establishes a discourse within the *Bildungsroman* that reflects on reading and uses it as a means

of intellectual development. Although this dissertation did not attempt to (re)define the *Bildungsroman*, it did engage scholars who consider the *Bildungsroman* as commentary on contemporary trends in the institutionalization of literature, including Kontje and Mahoney. Kontje's *Private Lives* thus investigates the effects of the literary revolution and the new institution of literature on the public sphere and explores how literary self-consciousness, as a result of these developments, appears in the early *Bildungsroman*. Mahoney's "The Apprenticeship of the Reader" surveys two centuries of fictional readers in a great number of novels. In this context, it is significant that these earliest examples of the genre analyze reading through their protagonists' *Bildung*. The novels conceptualize the genre in terms of a reading obsession—a direct influence of the reading mania (*Lesewut*) of the authors' time. In order to include reading as a theme, the novels undergo a thematic transformation. Thus, the *Lehrjahre*, which starts with the theater, gradually turns into a background for the discussion of reading. Similarly, *Sternbald* follows the transition from visual to textual reception, where the fine arts serve as a reason and outlet for reading. Finally, *Ofterdingen*, which does not use any other art forms for contrast, explores how visual and textual reception reciprocally shape reading.

Later novels further expand the representation of reading in fiction. An obvious next step in my own research would be to broaden the timeframe of discussion to include Goethe's *Wanderjahre*, which investigates storytelling, archiving, and information sharing among the members of the Society of the Tower. The analysis of the three novels in this dissertation aimed to answer how early examples of the *Bildungsroman* reacted to changes in reading behavior. A similar analysis of the *Wanderjahre* would reveal how Goethe dealt with the question of reading at a time when the modern way of reading was already well established. As Piper asserts, Goethe's second Meister novel "played a pivotal role in addressing the rules and protocols of

print communication” (127). To appreciate its approach, it is important also to understand how the *Lehrjahre* and the two Romantic novels approach the newly emerging print culture and fading orality. To borrow Käuser’s term, they offer the “Literarisierung des Mündlichen” (238), thereby revitalizing orality within the boundaries and limits of print.

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